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TO KNOW AND BELIEVE

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THE WHITE STONE:

Some characteristics of the
Christian Life. Small 8vo.

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

To Know and Believe

STUDIES IN THE APOSTLES' CREED

BY

JOHN McGAW FOSTER

RECTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH, BOSTON

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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TO THE BELOVED MEMORY OF
MY PARENTS
WHO FIRST GUIDED MY STEPS TOWARDS
THE WAY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
WHEREIN THEY WALKED
WITH GOD

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PREFACE

THIS little book is an attempt to help towards better understanding of the Faith, some who are endeavouring to lead the Christian life. There are many whose minds, although untrained in the conventional methods of theological thought, turn often towards questions of doctrine. To such, these studies in the Creed are addressed in the hope that they may lead to right understanding in place of the unnecessary conclusion of unbelief which sometimes follows untrained and unguided thought. They are simply an endeavour to interpret the fundamentals of the Faith according to modes of thought with which most people are familiar. For many years the writer has followed the outlines of these studies in the preparation for Confirmation of maturer and more thoughtful Candidates. He ventures to hope that this more formal embodiment of them may be a suggestion to others in such instruction, as well as a help to a wider circle of those who crave guidance in their consideration of the Faith.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. DOCTRINE AND LIFE	1
II. OUR BELIEF IN GOD	6
III. GOD THE FATHER	17
IV. THE SON OF GOD	23
V. THE STORY OF THE CHRIST	31
VI. CHRIST THE WAY	41
VII. THE SUPREME SACRIFICE	56
VIII. PARADISE	63
IX. THE SUPREME MIRACLE	70
X. THE ASCENDED LORD — THE JUDGE	79
XI. THE HOLY SPIRIT	87
XII. THE SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH	95
XIII. THE BOUNDLESS FUTURE	110

To Know and Believe

I

DOCTRINE AND LIFE

THE relation of Doctrine to Life is a question in which we readily become confused. In these days many men believe that there has been in the past a tendency to exalt dogma to too high degree; and it is a natural reaction to do away with it altogether. Perhaps the average layman feels that questions of theological doctrine do not greatly concern him; he will leave their consideration to the clergy; what he wishes to know is how to meet the problems of daily life. We hear the call for "simple practical preaching," which shall forsake the exposition of doctrinal tenets which are not appreciated by the man in the pew; we sometimes hear it asserted that it is not what a man thinks or believes but the life which he lives that counts for his salvation. In the very evident truth of this assertion lies the danger of confusion. Indeed, it is the life which makes for salvation; and it was to establish the life that the Lord of our salvation came into the world. "I am

come that they might have life," said He who also asked of the champions of ceremony and dogma of His time: "Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?" There could be no sterner arraignment of the exaltation of dogma as an end in itself.

But the primary purpose of Christian doctrine is not to be an end in itself, but a means towards the establishment and development of Christian character. Though it is not the "life" or the "body," it is the "meat" and the "raiment." And meat and raiment are essential factors in the nurture and welfare of bodily life. It is no less the case in spiritual life. In the quaint language of the Book of Common Prayer the minister is bidden to warn the parents and sponsors of the newly-baptized infant, as a factor in his training to "live a godly and a Christian life," that he be taught those "things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health." *The health of the soul* is the one purpose which the Christian Church has in mind in the nurture of her children; and for the establishment and preservation of such health she knows that it is essential that certain things be known and believed. In the enumeration of these things, which the child should be taught, the Prayer Book specifies the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. Doctrine, prayer, ethics — those

things when rightly understood and employed, make for the health of the soul, which is salvation.

In these pages we are entering on a simple study of the first of these things. The Apostles Creed is the summary for the Christian, of those things which he ought to know and believe. It is a summary of the doctrine which makes for his soul's health. In secular education, the object of which is to fit the mind for the work of civilized life, there is difference of opinion as to the details of the subjects to be taught; but consensus of experience has determined upon certain things as fundamentals. Without training in these fundamentals no young man or woman is equipped to enter into the competition of modern civilized life. If, now and then, one attains a measure of success without this training, none is quicker than he to recognize the serious detriment to progress which this lack has been to him. So the consensus of the Christian Church recognizes that the soul which enters on the endeavour of the Christian career — the upbuilding of character to Eternal Life — is infinitely better equipped for that task if it is instructed in certain unique facts of history, and certain great truths of the higher life which have been revealed to men through history, and through thought and prayer. A summary of these facts and truths exists in the Church's heritage from the ages — the Apostles Creed. To

know and believe those truths of which it assures us is, as it were, the soul's capital in the winning of the heavenly treasure.

It is true that in all education the meat may be substituted for the life. Pedantry may take the place of scholarship; or the fetters of method may arrest the freedom of a mind of native powers of creation. It is true, also, that dogma for its own sake may warp the soul into bigotry and intolerance, and even pervert the purpose for which it was instituted. But Christian Doctrine in its subordinate purpose of training the soul to its health is the inspiration of perfect freedom. The call for "free thought" in religious matters is based on a fallacy, when it means thought untrained by the knowledge of those facts and truths which the ages have stored up for us. We can hardly imagine a parent who would refuse to permit his child to be instructed in the fundamentals of education on the ground that it would hamper the freedom of his mind. The youth who exhibits talent for music or for drawing is not left to develop that faculty untrained. The instruction which is given him in the principles which underlie either of these great Arts enable him to use his powers more freely, because more intelligently. The man who turns his back upon all that the world has learned of the great realities of the spiritual life with the idea that he may thus think more

freely, is apt to think grotesquely. True freedom in the realm of things spiritual is gained by him who has learned of the laws which govern the spiritual realm. Freedom to think is a human right; but the true freedom is of the man who need not waste time or energy in false thinking, but has learned to think rightly.

And right thinking bears fruit in righteous living. That is the axiom on which is based the Church's practice of instruction in the fundamentals of the faith. God asks of us no double test of belief and life. The one standard is the Life of Righteousness and Truth as it has been revealed to us in Christ. That we may the better mould our lives towards righteousness we are bidden to learn to think rightly.

It cannot be asserted that all so-called theological thinking is right thinking. There is much in the elaboration of the details of such thinking which is experimental; much which has had to be abandoned. But the simple summary, in the Creed, of that which has "always, everywhere and by all" been believed, being the consensus of what the Church, guided by the Spirit, has decided to be the essential facts of our faith, and the necessary deductions from those facts — these things ought to be known and believed to our soul's health.

II

OUR BELIEF IN GOD

BEFORE all else, our confession of faith declares belief in God. Our religion rests on that belief, and teaching or study of that religion is therefore *theology* — a teaching about God. Theology has always been classed as a science; and it is such in the broader sense of the word. But it does not answer the restrictions of the limited modern meaning of the term. As we understand science to-day it is the acquisition of knowledge of facts and phenomena, by a process of reasoning, proof and demonstration. Science may put forth many theories and assert probabilities. It asserts, however, the existence of no fact which cannot be proved or demonstrated. But the existence of God is not susceptible of the same proof which is applicable to material phenomena. The very nature of His Being — Infinite Spirit — precludes the possibility of mathematical proof or sensible demonstration; for infinity cannot be computed, or Spirit seen, heard or felt by the senses of men. Yet Theology hesitates not to assert the existence of God; and its

ultimate assurance of that great Fact lies not in the realm of sense or of mind but in the higher realm of spiritual understanding. The exercise of that understanding we call Faith. With the aid of faith we may perceive with our senses many evidences of God's existence; we may establish faith in His existence through mental processes of reasoning and deduction; but that on which in the end our knowledge of Him depends is the understanding by the spiritual faculty.

This higher understanding has been a development in the history, written and unwritten, of the human race. It has supplanted lower and cruder forms of belief. Through long centuries, there has existed in the minds of men of many and diverse races, a belief in God. Men have been as confident of the existence of a God as they have of their own existence. This belief has taken many forms and it has come from many sources. It has come from the reverence paid to departed ancestors. Those who have given being to the generation which for the time is alive upon the earth are worshipped, till popular belief attaches to them divine attributes, and they become gods. It has come from the awe which has stricken human hearts at the power of the forces of nature — the life-bearing warmth and light of the sun, the crash of the thunder and the force of the lightning-bolt, the irresistible rush of

the winds. The untutored imagination of man has attributed personality to all these forces, and named them gods. It has attributed a *divine* personality to them — that is a personality which exceeds that of humanity in power and scope, till it has reached the conception of the infinite. And from the thought of many divinities, a community of gods, each ruling a separate department of human nature or life, it reached the idea, among the ancient Jewish people, of one God, invisible, eternal, immortal, spiritual. It attained this ideal slowly and gradually. The Jehovah of Sinai and the desert, was but one god among many. He was the god to whom the Israelites gave their fealty and to whom they were disloyal when at times they turned from Him and “served Baalim and Ashtaroth.” It is still a far cry from that conception of a national god to the mighty ideal of One Eternal God, the god of every nation and people, which is the underlying basis of later Judaism, and of Christianity.

But all this but strengthens the faith of the Christian. It matters little to him if the earliest conception of divinity came to the rude savage through fear, or through the crude and superstitious worship of ancestry. It matters little though the thought of God which rises in the mind of the Christian when he recites the first sentence of his creed, was won for him only through the long and

slow march of the centuries, by struggle with crude and false ideas of deity. It is indeed but one example of that which we recognize as the universal law of all thought and all life — gradual development, the winning of place for the true and the abiding, by struggle with the crude and imperfect, and the final mastery over these. It is but an illustration of the universal truth that the first conception of great facts is often inadequate or even grotesque, and that the way to a fuller understanding is, like the proverbial way to the stars, “across the rough places.”

And the Idea of God still exists, as has been said, not in the realm of knowledge, but in that of faith. The Christian realizes that this, too, is an example of the same process of development. He recalls the fact, indicated in the history of nature, that the first forms of life upon this world in which we have our home, were crude and inorganic. With infinite moderation and by incessant struggle, the higher forms of life were developed. The faculties of sight, of hearing, were won in that age-long process to which the science of the past generation gave the name of evolution. And when that process ceased, when organic life, as we know it, was complete, and man stood at the head of creation, ruling it by the power of his superior mind and will, still the developing process was not ended. It has but entered

another realm — the spiritual. The Christian believes — rather is he conscious of the fact — that there exists in him a faculty which has the power of apprehending facts and truths, the nature of which cannot be touched by the senses, or even understood by the mind. He calls that faculty the spirit, and its exercise, faith. He realizes that it is yet in its infancy. It calls for bitter struggle, for rigorous exertion of faith, to apprehend spiritual things to-day. But some day far down the ages, he is sure, mankind will so have established this faculty, that through it he will perceive spiritual things with the same unconscious readiness with which we now see the landscape with the eye, and listen with the ear to the melody of music. By it he will then perceive the face of God, invisible to the eye, unprovable to the mind, but revealed to this higher faculty of the spirit. And since every faculty grows only by exercise, we know that this one could not develop into that which one day it is to be, if by the lower faculties of sense we could see God, or could understand Him by the powers of mind. He is known only by the spiritual faculty, and that faculty is as yet in its infancy.

We know God, therefore, only by faith — that is to say, we *believe* in Him. Men have sought to strengthen their faith by argument which should demonstrate the existence of God. Familiar forms

of such argument are those of the First Cause — that all life and action must have some great ultimate cause back of all the secondary or immediate causes; or that from Design, which reasons that some purpose exists in the order and organization of the Universe, and that such a purpose implies a mind of infinite intelligence to arrange it; or that argument which asserts that the instinctive belief in deity, almost universal among the races of the world, must have its significance in the great Fact of God. But such arguments merely make for the strengthening of our faith by bringing it into line with our reason; they do not prove or demonstrate the existence of God. His existence is a matter for our faith alone.

In emphasizing this truth, we must bear in mind the fact that the Christian possesses as his choicest treasure a book which he holds to be the revelation of God. We regard the Bible as the authority for our belief in the fact of the divine existence. It is well to consider the nature of this revelation. The books of the Old Testament are in large part the record of the exercise of that faith which is the higher spiritual insight. It is this fact which is dwelt upon at length in the great eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the mighty names of old are one by one rehearsed to give evidence of their reliance upon this quality of faith.

The prophets of the olden time were men in whom this faculty was so developed, that they became conscious in their inner selves of direct intercourse with the unseen God. They were so strongly imbued with this consciousness that they hesitated not to speak forth their convictions and their warnings as the very voice of God himself. So, too, with the great achievers. Their deeds for their nation were the endeavour to interpret the spirit which filled them when they stood on the pinnacle of their faith and with spiritual vision saw the hidden face of God. And that which was foreshadowed in the Old Testament is realized in the Gospel story. We shall consider this more fully when we reach the study of that portion of the Creed which dwells upon the life of Christ. In that life was manifested the triumph of faith. It was the one life in history in which the spiritual faculty attained its perfection. Christ was not upheld merely by faith in God, because he actually perceived and realized the presence of God. Where others grope in the darkness, he saw. Thus, looking through the personality of Christ, he who believes sees God.

But still it is only he who believes to whom the Bible stands as authoritative revelation of God. It answers the spiritual longing; it replies to the questionings of faith in that it tells of men through the ages to whom faith has brought satisfaction, and of

One who realized and revealed God. But it is without authority to him in whom this impulse has not awakened; it is a "stumbling-block and foolishness" to such as know not faith.

Asserting thus Christianity's *belief* in God, the Creed at once expounds that doctrine concerning His nature which has been the Church's shibboleth since Apostolic days — the Doctrine of the Trinity. Each paragraph begins with an assertion of faith in one of the Three Persons which in the thought of this mystical dogma unite in the One God. "I believe in God the Father" . . . "[I believe] in Jesus Christ His Only Son Our Lord" . . . "I believe in the Holy Ghost." Father, Son, Holy Spirit, are thus definitely named as objects of our faith.

Brought thus face to face with this great mystery of our belief, the Christian may well ask what it signifies to him. His religion, as we have seen, is based upon the belief in an Infinite Being, whose existence cannot be proved, yet can be appreciated by the exercise of the spiritual faculty through faith. Must this belief include the acceptance of a mystery by his mind — a description, as it were, of the nature of God, which the mind cannot understand, but in which it must acquiesce?

It is surely reasonable to assert the proposition that a finite mind cannot fully grasp infinite Fact.

Familiar instances in natural law illustrate this. We know that the human ear receives certain vibrations in the atmosphere and interprets them to the consciousness as *sound*. Yet we know that there exist sound-waves, above and below the range of our hearing. Roughly speaking, there exist sounds which we cannot hear, because they are too high or too low for the human ear to grasp. Yet, our educated imagination may reach beyond the range of our physical sense, and enable us to conceive that it is only physical limitation which prevents us from hearing those silent harmonies. So our educated faith enables us to conceive that beyond the range of our minds there exist truths which are none the less real because our minds cannot grasp them. Our intelligence is limited; but truth is infinite.

In the realm of this Infinite Truth lies the nature of God. Certain facts about Him are within the range of our understanding. These facts, as we say, have been revealed to us. But because we cannot grasp infinity, we know not what lies concealed beyond these facts; and, save by the exercise of faith, we are powerless to correlate these into the exact relation they bear one to another in the infinite unity of the divine nature.

The facts which we can grasp more or less definitely, are three: First, that God is the Creator of all things visible and invisible; second, that One

Life in history so perfectly conformed to what we recognize as the laws of truth and righteousness that we are constrained to call it divine; and third, that there exists an Influence, making itself felt upon our consciousness, which instructs and inspires us in the way of more holy living. These three facts Christian Doctrine names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and unites them all in the Infinite Being of God. We know not what other facts or attributes make up that Infinite Personality; these three, at least, we may dimly comprehend.

As these words are written, there is slowly growing on the heights above New York, a structure which is destined to be the great Cathedral of the New World. A mighty arch rises on high; great columns surround the arc where is to rest its sanctuary; and one chapel, a triumph of the architect's genius, stands in completed beauty. These facts in the structure of the great building exist to-day, and are visible to all who approach. Yet out from them the mind may frame a picture more or less inadequate of the completed edifice. Instructed in the general forms and outlines of architecture, the imagination may fill in the great gaps in construction, and portray to itself massive wall and delicately traced window; flying buttresses and soaring spires. It cannot know of all the wealth of sculpture and colour; warmth of light and gloom of shadow; still, out from what is

seen, it shapes its vision of that which as yet is unseen.

So in our thought of God. From that which we know and experience we form the vision, all too inadequate, of the Infinite One. Infinite Personality is the conception of God which our aspiring faith seeks to apprehend; and faith soars towards that apprehension from the Three Facts which experience and history have brought within the realm of present-day understanding, and which we name Father, Son and Spirit — the Three Persons in One — the Trinity.

And since this much has been revealed to us, any conception of God which omits one or more of these Persons is inadequate — it is a false god, an idol. We cannot think of Him as less than Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier. Even to satisfy our minds we must accept the Trinity. To satisfy our minds, also, we must think of Him as eternal, and immanent in His works. Thus our minds must accept what they cannot adequately comprehend, while the spiritual faculty we call faith supplies the vacancies and builds up in our deeper understandings the vision of the Infinite Personality.

III

GOD THE FATHER

IN the last chapter we made use of the word Personality, applying it to the soul's conception of God through faith. The thought of personality, in its tenderest form, is breathed through the word which stands linked with the name of God in the first phrase of the Creed — the Father. In the next phrase He is called "Maker of Heaven and Earth." These two ideas — that of Creative Force and of tender Personality — unite to form our thought of the First Person of the Trinity.

We have already spoken of the primitive instinct which led men to find God in the great forces of Nature. And if the "untutored mind" of the savage finds Him in sun or wind, the educated mind of the Christian looks beyond these special manifestations of force and beholds one Universal Force and one Universal Law of which these manifestations are, as it were, but embodiments. Nor is it only the mind of him who is educated in Christian teaching to which this conception of Universal Force and Law is presented. It is the tendency of all scien-

tific thought to-day. Where the science of a former generation spoke of various forces — as gravitation or cohesion or capillary attraction, of centripetal and centrifugal force, the science of to-day finds these to be but forms of the one Force and Law which controls the universe. And where the Pagan believed in a god of the sea, a goddess of the earth, and gods of all the winds that blow, the Christian believes in One God who creates and controls all these things, and is manifested in all these subordinate forces. The thoughtful Christian is at one with the man of science in his acceptance of One Creative and Dominant Force, one universal Law. But he adds to this thought another which completes it. It is the province of science to deal only with those things which are evident and admit of logical proof, or at least of reasonable demonstration in the realm of probability. It is the right of religion to add to this demonstration and reasoning that which lies in its peculiar province of faith. And thus it complements this conception of God as Universal Force by the belief in Him as Universal Personality. It is that conception which is embodied in the word Father. The Creative and Dominant Force is the Father Almighty — the Infinite Person.

It is necessary for us to have a clear idea of what we understand by this word Personality. It is a

very easy and natural thing for us to fall into the error of confusing it with Individuality. When we think of a *person*, we are wont to call up before us the image of one of those embodiments of personality with which we are familiar in the world around us. Our friends, relatives and neighbours, all the men and women with whom we mingle, and who, known or unknown, come in contact with us, are persons. If we think of personality, there instinctively arises in our minds either the definite image of one of these companions of our way, or the abstract image based upon this familiar experience. We know that we, ourselves, are persons; and we are conscious of our own personality in our bodily forms and senses. In our thought of a personal God, therefore, it is difficult to dissociate the idea of personality from its manifestation in individual form. The pagan makes no attempt at such distinction and naively represents his god in material likeness. This may be, according to the development of the mind which conceives it, a rude copy of beast or bird, a grotesque representation of some monstrous form, or the refined and beautiful outlines of an ideal human figure. The "idols of wood and stone," whether of rude savagery or of classic mythology, are attempts to express the thought of personality in deity.

But reflection persuades us that even in every day experience, we cannot limit personality to its bodily

manifestation. Essential though this is to the expression of personal life, we realize that personality itself is something deeper and more intangible. The common facts of experience teach us this. The changing aspect of the human form through advancing years, the differentiation of facial expression and manner from time to time, convince us that the real personality is something unseen, which employs the outward, visible form as its instrument. Long years may separate us from the friend we love, and yet that love remains unquenched. And when again we meet, our outward form and his may have become so altered that we mutually fail of recognition; yet the old harmonies awake, the old love revives, and soul touches soul again. We cannot explain, what we mean by soul; we cannot tell what is that intangible essence which lies beneath the outward semblance; yet we can but believe that it is there, superior to all externals, and using them only as its instrument. The storm-clouds which fall from the west after the heat of a summer day are charged with that mysterious essence we call electricity. It manifests itself now and again in the varied play of the lightning-flash; it sends its bolt to earth where conditions favour it; it may be brought to our homes and streets and factories. It is one of the most familiar phenomena in our experience; yet it is intangible and invisible — we know not what. The

fact that its manifestations to us are through some medium, does not hinder our belief in its existence. So that which we call soul must needs be dependent on the outward form for its manifestation. It reveals itself by word or touch, or play of feature. Yet we know that its existence is back of these things and beyond them; and there is that within us which answers to the invisible and intangible reality which goes forth to us from our fellow man. That is personality.

And the Christian believes that his own personality can likewise reach forth to the Infinite Personality of God. He believes that back of the outward manifestations of creative and sustaining power in the universe there stands a Cause. He believes that this cause enters into all forms of life and activity which we know. It pervades them all, as the life of man pervades all functions and activities of the body. And, though the existence of the universe in its ceaseless play, the life of plant and animal, the intelligence and will of humanity, cannot prove God, they do speak of Him and reveal Him to the soul who believes. But it is more than a vast, infinite Cause in which the Christian believes. He is confident that that which has created and still sustains the universe is Infinite Personality. It possesses, therefore, in infinite degree the characteristics of intelligence and reason and love; for these

are the attributes which mark our own personality. And as the relationship which sentient, loving beings bear to the One Being like Whom they are is not that alone of the created to the Creator, but of child to parent, the Christian names the Infinite Person, God the Father. The Christian is not satisfied to believe that man with his power of thought, his capacity for emotion, his dawning spiritual faculty, can be the creation of an insensate, impersonal force which does not have the very characteristics of conscious life which he knows himself to possess. The Creator of personal man is the Infinite Person. God is the Father of humanity.

And as we say this, we realize the truth which is supreme throughout the universe — that the great law of all is Love. It is hard to attribute even physical laws to anything but an infinite Intelligence; it is impossible to conceive infinite Love without Personality. Even if we could yield to the material scientist enough to admit that impersonal law and order are the ultimate causes of natural phenomena, the Christian knows that Love can have no such origin. It can come forth only from the divine heart of the Father. He Who created all, reaches forth to the child of His creation in infinite love.

IV

THE SON OF GOD

THE Eternal Creator of Heaven and Earth reveals Himself to us in His creation. We have already realized that any intelligent mind must read in the outward evidence of created life the Fact of a creator. The savage finds it there and fears. The tutored mind of higher races sees it and worships. The thunder crashes in the heavens and savage man trembles lest he has incurred the wrath of the thunder-god. The violet nestles by the wayside and the poet finds in it the expression of the infinite soul of beauty, while the man of science studies its dainty tracery, and notes the marvellous intricacy and adaptation of each microscopic part. To all alike in different degrees the manifold works of the Creator are revelations of His infinite skill and power. A thoughtful man finds in the book which he reads not only entertainment or instruction; but comes close to the mind of the author. A tale may hold us with the vivid movement of its narrative or divert us by the sprightliness of the dialogue on the

lips of its characters; but to him who thinks, it reveals to some extent its writer's personality. He admires the cleverness or the genius of the mind which conceived it; he shares the author's views of men and events; he comes in touch with the character who created, through the fictitious characters which he has created. And the more sympathetic or intelligent the reader, the more the true personality of the writer is revealed to him. And one day a book appears which more than all the others, seems to us to ring true to the inner life of the author. We read it, enthralled, and say, "Here at last, we see not only revelations of the character of the man but the man himself. No doubt the story is that of his own life; the experiences his, the thoughts and opinions those which he himself cherishes. If we have come upon points of contact with him in his other writings, in this we are face to face with his true self."

To the man or woman who, with devout appreciation believes in God, the works of the divine hand reveal the divine Character. And there are degrees of this revelation, as there are degrees in the revelation of author to reader through the medium of his books. We gain glimpses of the divine character as we reverently view that which God's hand has spread about us. The ocean joins with the lightning and the wind in telling us of power;

the mountain speaks of permanence and the beauty that dwell in grandeur. The flower and leaf breathe a gentler beauty; and the heavens declare the glory of God and reveal infinity. But we touch greater depths of the revelation of God's character when we share the thoughts and meditations, the endeavours and achievements of his children. For the power of man to think and to do is the manifestation, in greater or less degree, of the Infinite Energy. In the intelligent and progressive mind of humanity, a higher creation of God than the material world, there comes a more intimate revelation of the eternal activity of the Creator. He speaks through human speech, He manifests his tireless creative power through the ever-advancing triumph of the human mind over the lower world which man dominates. And when the thoughts of man turn towards things spiritual, when the endeavour of man is towards righteousness and holiness, then at last we gain glimpses of the real character of God in its holiness and truth. Such a revelation as this is given us in the books of the Old Testament. The spiritual aspiration of the Psalmist, the holy ideals of the prophets, the story of the struggles and triumphs of men who believed in God and tried to serve Him — these are truly revelations of the deeper and higher characteristics of the Infinite God. No wonder that men found in them, as many still find

there, a completer revelation of God than anywhere else in His manifold works.

But the Christian believes and knows that there has been one revelation of the divine character deeper and completer than all else. In the One Perfect Life which the world has known the character of God is revealed to humanity. We speak of Jesus Christ as "begotten not made." And when we say this we are thinking, not of the flesh and blood through which the Perfect Life was manifested to the world, but of that Perfect Life itself. To convey to us that perfect revelation of God it was necessary to employ the medium of the highest of God's creations — the human form. But that which lives and speaks to us in Jesus Christ is not a *creature* but is the perfect Character of God Himself. It is the revelation of Him as He is eternally — the pure and flawless Personality manifested through the words and deeds of one human life. That life ran a brief span of three and thirty years; it moved in the environment of a comparatively insignificant Oriental land of twenty centuries ago; it conformed to the conditions, the manner of thought and speech of its age and place. But these things are not the essentials. The essential is that as we read of that life, we know that it rings true to the Mind and Soul of God. Had Jesus lived in the Europe or America of to-day, He would have spoken

in another tongue, observed other customs. Yet His life would use these different instruments to sound the same harmonies. The strain of music may sound from the piano, or ring through organ pipes, or breathe from the strings of an orchestra; it is alike the same strain, which was born in the soul of its composer. And through the life of the humble Man of Nazareth, there sounded the Perfect Harmony of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds. Other lives may have caught snatches of that strain; in that One only has it pealed forth its harmony. In other lives the divine impetus comes only now and then to the fore in moments of special exaltation or rapt devotion; in Jesus it was the constant and normal life. In others it seems hidden and its exercise hampered by the conflicting presence of human and selfish and animal tendencies; in Jesus such tendencies are overmastered till they have no sway, and are but the willing servants of the Spirit of God. Therefore the Christian beholds in Jesus the Only Son of God. As we think thus of Him, the thought of His humanity fades out of sight and we are face to face with God.

Yet in His Person the divine and human meet. If we have thought of His human personality as being but the passive servant of the divine Spirit, on the other hand we must think of it as the supreme attainment of the human in its upward climb. The

most generally accepted explanation, to-day, of the method of God's Creation is that of development. Thoughtful students of nature believe that the world in which we live and the various forms of life which inhabit it are the result of a gradual growth through countless ages. From the simple and formless cell, life developed into forms of intricate organization, rising higher and higher till it found its crown in man. And as it has risen, each form has retained some characteristics of those beneath it, while introducing higher ones which dominate them. We find resemblances between those lower forms of animal life which possess only crudely developed ganglia, and the higher forms with organized brain; but in the one, intelligence is lacking, and in the other it is dominant. There is a kinship between the higher animals and man. Many of them give evidence of qualities of intelligence and emotion which are very human. On the other hand, man is indubitably an animal. In infancy, and in many respects throughout his career, he seems essentially to have retained his animal nature. Yet through his maturing years is made evident the fact that his brain-development is so superior to that of the higher animals as to constitute a difference not only of degree but of kind. The qualities of will and intelligence and reason of which the higher animal gives evidence, are the dominating characteristic of man. If they

are animals with glimmerings of intelligence, he is intelligence inhabiting the animal.

So, also, man and Christ are kin. Man is human, so was Jesus. But again there is a difference; and it lies in what we call the spiritual faculty. In man it manifests itself in what we call faith. Sometimes feeble, it rises at times to heights of aspiration till at rare intervals it almost attains tranquillity. In the Perfect Man this faculty is established. Jesus was always conscious of the reality of the unseen things of the spiritual life. That towards which men aspire, He knew. That one quality was in Him so developed as to constitute a difference in kind. Where other men are human with gleamings of the spiritual life, in Him the spiritual life is the dominant characteristic. Thus again, while all men are the sons of God in so far as they aspire and at times attain to the spiritual life, in Him the spiritual life was established, its attainment triumphant. On His human side also, He was the Only Son of God. In Him is the meeting-point of humanity in its upward development towards the perfect life, with the divinity which is its life and home.

Around this Figure of the Christ, therefore, centres the hope and endeavour of the Christian. Looking up at Him we see the highest possible summit of the development of our race. He is perfect humanity — the goal towards which we climb. Looking within

Him we see God — the Infinite Personality of Power and Love — expressed in that form which can be appreciated by our senses and understood by our minds, the perfect human life. Therefore the central paragraph of our creed dwells upon the facts of the historic life of Jesus that we may keep before us the outline of the story of that Perfect Character, Who is the pattern for our striving and the revelation of the Father whose children we are.

V

THE STORY OF THE CHRIST

THE Apostles' Creed gathers up for us the vital points of the story which is told us in the Gospels. The Christian believes that this story is authentic. Yet the very nature of the history, the fact that it tells of a life unique in its character and actions among the lives of men, and that into the story is woven an element of the supernatural, is sufficient to make men challenge its genuineness. What right have we to expect men to believe that a story of this nature is genuine history? Is it not rather a clever fable, written by men of an age when it was much easier to impose upon the world a belief in mysterious stories, than it is to-day? Such an idea of the nature of the Gospels is indeed held by many who are willing to accept the fact as historic that such a person as Jesus actually lived. There was, they admit, a teacher of great spirituality in Judæa at the time when Pontius Pilate was Governor of that province. But, they claim, we know no more of him than this. The stories which pass as history are but the inventions of men who wished to make others

believe certain theories of their own, and used the few known facts of his life as a framework on which to hang these theories.

Against such assertions the Christian points not only to the reverent tradition which has held the Gospels through the centuries as the authentic record of the words and deeds of Jesus; but he is able to show by manuscripts of great antiquity which are still extant, and the testimony of contemporary writers regarding them, that at least the first three of the Gospel narratives were accepted as genuine history as far back as within the first century after the lives of those who wrote them as eye-witnesses of the events. If men so near the time of the occurrence of these events as recorded accepted them, it is strong reason for our acceptance. It may be safely said that no writings of the classic period of Greek and Roman literature are more securely attested as to their genuineness than the works of the Evangelists. Were it not, as we have said, that the nature of the history recorded in these writings is unusual, the story of a life absolutely unique among the lives of the world, men would have no more hesitation in accepting it than they experience in accepting the events recorded in Cæsar's Commentaries. It need not shake our faith when we are reminded that the Jewish historian Josephus is silent regarding this wondrous life; for

we know that all the events of it were not believed among the orthodox Jews — as they are not believed among them to-day. The most natural attitude for a writer of that stamp to assume concerning a character whom he regarded an impostor, and a dangerous one, would be silence. Nor are we dismayed at like silence among contemporary Roman writers; for the words and deeds of a religious fanatic in a remote and insignificant province would be to them unworthy of remark. Like the proconsul Gallio, they would “care for none of these things.” And if a hint of the miracles of love and healing or the sublime story of the Resurrection reached their ears, it could hardly be greeted seriously by a people in whose own mythology wonder-stories were all too familiar, and by the thoughtful and educated were treated with tolerant scepticism. We recall the mingling of derision and mock courtesy with which the Athenians greeted St. Paul’s reference to the Resurrection. It seemed to them but an echo from barbaric lands of the tales of their own gods and heroes at which they had learned indulgently to smile. And as the growth of the new faith was among the slaves and lower classes of the Empire, we cannot wonder that the faith which meant so much to them was scornfully tossed aside by the sceptical minds of the higher ranks. It was to them but the ignorant and fanatical following of “a cer-

tain Chrestus." To the educated Roman of the Empire the religion of Christ would mean little more than the native religion of Hawaii would signify to the ordinary American of to-day. Indeed, it would be even less, in a way, as the science of comparative religions and folk-lore which interest a few in these days, had not yet developed.

Thus the Christian need expect to find the records of the founding and early growth of the religion which is dear to him only in the writings of those who believed and followed it. Such records he finds written in a simple sincerity which itself breathes authenticity, in the Gospels of the Evangelists. And as the story which these records tell is a unique one, it is well for the Christian to consider this characteristic of uniqueness and perhaps supernaturalness in the story which he believes.

Let us remember, therefore, that the story of Jesus is the record of the life which stands out above the lives of other human beings as having attained the perfection of the spiritual. In such a life we can but expect to find deeds and achievements which can have no parallel in ordinary human history. The history of the achievements of a man of scientific knowledge and attainments of the present century contains much that is unparalleled in the history of any of the great names of former ages. Modern knowledge and discovery has opened a

realm of which the great minds of the past had no intimation. The achievements of Edison or Marconi may not be in themselves greater, but they are of an entirely different order from those of Alexander or Charlemagne. The engines of modern warfare bring into play forces undreamed of by the armies of Hannibal. The simplest electrical engineer of modern times can achieve results before which the engineers of the Pyramids would fall in terror. Powers unknown, elements the existence of which was scarcely guessed in antiquity, are the familiar companions of our twentieth-century life. The story, therefore, of achievements into which these forces and elements enter, though familiar to us, would read like a tale of miracle to men whose knowledge and development were that of the ancient Romans.

So, also, the story of Jesus is the history of One who lived in the perfect understanding of forces and principles which to us are but mysteries. The law of the spiritual life, the key to which is righteousness and faith and love, was the very alphabet of the character of Jesus. He lived and moved in it, with a comprehension and mastery far more complete than is that of the modern world of science over the laws of electricity and steam. Many of the events of His life, therefore, which are the natural outcome of His knowledge and mastery of these laws, read to us as wonder tales. Some day, when "we shall

be like Him and see Him as He is," these laws of the spirit, amidst which we so ignorantly live, will reveal themselves to us, and we shall know the secret of the mastery, through them, of lower things. Till then, let us, who believe the story of the Gospels to be the authentic record of the life of the Perfect Man, realize that those events of His history which we call miraculous are the logical expression of a nature to whom that secret had been revealed. In myth and fable, stories of miracle are introduced to show the supernatural powers of the hero. The more grotesque and marvellous they are, the greater proof they offer to this end. But in the life of Jesus no story of miracle is introduced with such a purpose. Indeed, in the account of His temptation in the wilderness, He is represented as once for all casting behind Him the thought of employing His powers to win the admiration of the world or to prove His superiority. The temptation to cast Himself from a pinnacle of the temple, that all the world might see His immunity from the logical results of an infraction of natural law, was repugnant to Him. But when His spirit was stirred with the longing to ease human suffering and supply human need, then the higher laws worked through Him and brought forth their fruit in abundance. St. John tells us, indeed, that in His first miracle, He manifested forth His glory. So does the sun manifest its glory as it

rises above the world and brings life and nurture to it. Its very fulfillment of its nature is such a manifestation. And Jesus was but fulfilling His nature of love and brotherly kindness in furnishing the wine at the wedding feast as He was when He fed the multitudes and healed the sick. If in so doing, He employed His mastery of higher laws, we may liken His act to that of the educated physician using his knowledge of the healing art among savages whose only idea of such an art is the use of nauseous herbs and meaningless incantations. Christianity does not ask us to believe in Christ because He wrought miracles. It asks us to believe that he wrought what to our ignorance are miracles because He was the Perfect Man.

In such a thought as this we accept the statement of our Creed concerning His own birth: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary." It is true that no hint of the miraculous nature of His birth appears in the words of Jesus Himself. Nor does St. Paul, writing in the earliest years of Christianity, once make mention of this wonderful and beautiful story. It seems to some minds, therefore, as if the pioneers of the Church attached little weight to it; and therefore there has grown up a tendency among some who still profess faith in the divinity of Christ, to suppose that the accounts of the miraculous conception and birth, which are in the Gospels

of Matthew and Luke, are inserted there rather as the result of a reverent tradition, than as historic fact. Men wished to impress on others, they say, their own faith in the divine nature of our Lord. Therefore, without attempt at deceit or fraud, there grew up this tradition that the Son of Mary was without human fatherhood — the direct offspring of the power of the Holy Spirit which came upon and overshadowed the Virgin Mother. And this tradition, they think, was incorporated in two of the Gospels and in the creeds of the Church. Such as hold this view believe that the Power of God is manifested through the ordinary phenomena of nature quite as much as through any conceivable transcending or overturning of them. Since all processes of nature are God's work, the son of Joseph and Mary might be just as truly the Son of God as the child of the Virgin Mother.

But it is the corollary of this very truth on which the Christian who accepts the statement of the Gospels and the Creed, bases his faith. We who believe in the Virgin Birth affirm that the familiar processes of nature are in themselves miracles. We know that the seed springs into life — that the microscopic germ is quickened, and develops into the new individual. We may study these processes and formulate descriptions of them which we call laws. But when we have done all this, we still stand in awe before

the Power which performs these things. By observation we learn the process; still no one of us can answer how or why it is thus. It is the method of the divine working through nature which is familiar; the Power which performs the work is still miracle. Is it not, therefore, a reasonable faith to believe that the Infinite Force which creates the daily miracle of nature, may under other circumstances, achieve its results through other or varied processes? The Power of the Spiritual Life is hidden to those who, though living in the midst of it, know not the law by which it moves. And the circumstances of the birth of the Perfect Man may be those to call into being its unknown working. Such a thought as this is higher and truer than one which conceives of the Almighty Father as creating a special wonder-sign, in order that the world must believe the divinity of Christ our Lord. We know that such a thought was most repugnant to the Master's own estimate of the causes which should win belief in Him. It is "the wicked and adulterous generation" which seeketh after a sign. He points inquiries after evidences of His divinity not to a sign, but to His "works," of love, of healing and of preaching. These works may include His employment of the higher spiritual laws; but these laws are called into being as the agents of His love, never as signs to convince the world of His claims.

And in placing in the Creed the declaration of faith in the Virgin Birth, the Church does not call upon us to believe it in order that we may thereby have a supernatural sign to prove the divinity of Jesus Christ. She bids us affirm our faith in the Divine Personality of the Perfect Man. And as we think of this Personality, unique in the story of human development and divine revelation, we feel that the sweet story of the Virgin Mother, her pure soul filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, falls into its place as one of the natural accessories in the record of the working of the forces of the Spiritual Law. In the reverent imagination of the Roman Church, with its tendency to elevate theories into dogmas, there is almost a naive recognition of the modern scientific ideas of development. Its dogma of the Immaculate Conception affirms that the Virgin herself, as the worthy mother of the Perfect One, must have been stainless from her birth. We need not assent to this theory, but we are constrained to believe in her innate purity of soul. And from the person of this pure Virgin enthralled and overshadowed by her devout consciousness of God's presence, there was born, through the working of the spiritual laws in ways with which in our ignorance we are not familiar, the Perfect Child who was the Son of God.

VI

CHRIST THE WAY

“SUFFERED under Pontius Pilate!” In these four solemn and pregnant words the Creed gathers up all the story of the life of the Perfect Man between the record of His wondrous birth and the last hours of his mission on earth. And we ought to regard them as the compendium of that life’s history, of which the fuller record is written in the Gospel. Perhaps we are apt to think of them only as referring to the sombre story of the betrayal, the trial and the scourging with which the name of the weak-hearted Roman Governor is especially associated. But we ought to view them with larger scope. The name of Pontius Pilate not only recalls to us the deliverance of Jesus into the hands of the Jews, by one who had power and authority to protect Him, but it serves the larger purpose of fixing for all time the epoch in the world’s history when God was revealed to humanity through Jesus Christ. Whoever repeats the Creed, of whatever nationality or faith he may be, learns that at the period in the story of the world when Pilate was Procurator over the Roman Pro-

vince of Judæa, there walked on earth the Perfect Man who was the Son of God. No longer need men hope for His coming — at one definite time in the world's history He came. In that little Oriental land, insignificant amid the great reaches of the Roman Empire, yet teeming with the history of a people who had for centuries passionately sought God, this Life had appeared — as nowhere else it could appear. That one Fact is fixed for us.

But another fact unites with this as we repeat these words. Were it only to establish the date of the Christ's coming, the Creed might merely say: "Lived under Pontius Pilate." But to the life was added the fact of suffering. And when we contemplate this second fact we must realize that it over-spreads the life, and is a suffering not merely or chiefly of body, but of spirit. We may have a narrower thought of it. There may be a tendency to centre our idea of the redemptive work of Christ around the few hours of the Crucifixion. The Cross is the symbol of our Faith and stands as the expression of the sufferings of Him Who gave His life for us. As a symbol, indeed it is the cherished treasure of Christianity. But in our reverence for it we should not let it mean to us that the Passion of our Lord was merely the physical suffering of Calvary or even the mental agony of Gethsemane. Such a conception is belittling to our faith and can but

react on our own spiritual growth. As the culminating events of Christ's lifetime, Gethsemane and Calvary stand for ever sacred. They are the crisis in the divine tragedy. But that tragedy was the lifetime which began in the manger at Bethlehem. There are written for us the records of hostility and rejection, betrayal, and crucifixion; there remains unwritten the story of the inner life of the Man of Sorrows. Only now and then do we gain glimpses of it. Only by the reverent use of our imagination can we picture to ourselves the experience of a life which, sinless from its beginning, was lived in a sinful world. Our own human experiences, in so far as our own divine nature is striving for the supremacy, may give us an earnest of the sufferings of the Sinless One.

The shock which comes to the innocent soul when it first is brought in contact with vice, is transmuted into a deep pervading sorrow, when that soul has learned its own weakness, and yet by God's grace, keeps itself pure. Sorrow fills it not only in the realization of its own tendency to evil, but more as it sees the indifference of the world around. A world that is given over to sensuality and sin, in the midst of which our best aspirations and endeavours seem vain and our influence fruitless, brings in itself suffering to the human soul which loves righteousness. Magnify this human experience a thousand

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to persuade him to release them from his toils. Yet scarcely more satisfactory, to the reverent sense of the present generation, are many of the philosophical explanations of the necessity of an Atonement in the great Plan of Salvation. The trained mind of the theologian can satisfy itself by subtle reasoning that a loving Father, longing to restore to His erring children their lost inheritance, must yet bid His love conform to the inexorable laws of justice and righteousness. Man has broken the law of life; he must suffer the consequence of his disobedience. Yet, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The truth of this — of God's love so vast that He gave His only Son for our salvation — is simple enough for every heart. But why does infinite Justice demand this sacrifice of infinite Love? It is in the answer to this question that philosophies and theologies often fail to satisfy the untrained mind.

It is our purpose in these pages to deal with the teachings of the Faith not in the language of theological science; but to approach them from the point of view of the simple reverent seeker after truth. Let us seek the answer to these questions in the same spirit. We have already considered the declaration of the Creed in regard to the nature of Christ.

We have seen in Him the human and the divine — the infinite Personality of God revealed through the Perfect Man. And in this union of human and divine there comes to us the suggestion of the meaning of the Eternal Sacrifice. "God sent His Son into the world to redeem the world." We have found that this coming of the Son of God means to us that in the fullness of time One came living the perfect human life. That life was perfect because it was dominated by the Spirit of God. It could be naught else. The power of the Infinite Personality which it manifested compelled it to shape itself after the pattern of a perfect character. But the humanity of His nature likewise compelled Him to meet and deal with the problems of life one by one as He encountered them. Every human character is moulded and strengthened by the temptations which it masters, the habits which it forms, the obstacles it surmounts. The Christ-character was no exception. "Tempted like as we are," He met each temptation and overcame each obstacle by the power of the divine indwelling. Were this not so, He could not be our living example and guide. Like every human life, His, too, discovered step by step the way of truth. Each victory achieved, each new vantage ground won, led Him onward, as it leads onward every child of God. Only, in Him, the divine life which was a very part of His Nature

made each conflict end in victory, each step an advance, and kept Him without sin.

In this unbroken march of victory we see the working out of the world's salvation. Man had sinned; man must retrieve that error and live the perfect life. With the breaking, as it were, of that pathway through the wilderness, man can come to his home again. But none could clear that pathway save Him Who came as the Son of God in the fullness of His Father's strength. In the pathway which He alone could make we may follow. But He had to make it — there is the story of Christ's sacrifice. To create the way of life, whether it might lead over peaceful vales and by pleasant waters or across rugged and perilous crags, or through the Valley of the Shadow of Death — that was the task of the Christ. And indeed we may believe that in part of its course it was a way of pleasantness. The awakening life of the Child of Nazareth, in His quiet home, that life developed into a young manhood of ripening purpose, must have been filled with hours of serenity and peace. And in the years of His public ministry we gain glimpses of many an hour of happiness. It could but be a delight to wander with His devoted companions amid the rural ways of Palestine, through ripening cornfields and laden olive groves, with now and then an exhilarating climb on some mountain height. Always on those

heights there was not only delight to the eye and vigour to the frame, but there was the renewed sense of nearness to the Father; for on the heights He found the joy of communion and prayer. It must, too, have been a delight to tell the hungering multitudes the Good News — the joy of unfolding the message that was dearest to Him. It was happiness to heal the sick and relieve the afflicted, to watch the awakening of a new faith in the hearts of men; and it was a joy to talk of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God with those dear friends, like the family of Bethany, whose spirits entered into some realization of the meaning of these profounder truths. Through pleasant pastures and by still waters lay often the course of Him who found and led in the Way of Life.

Yet even when the course led through peaceful vales, it was not the way of the loiterer. Even on gentler slopes and through level meadows that way must be hewn that others may find it and follow. Christ's life with His disciples and friends was not the mere enjoyment of that intercourse — the interchange of thought from soul to soul. Always before Him rose the purpose of His life. Each word and act was moulded by that purpose, that those who were dearest to Him might be guided to the pathway He came to prepare. Never could the thought of "His Father's business" be absent from Him. In

the very dominance of that purpose there is the beginning of sacrifice. It is as the difference between the care-free playtime of the child and the serious life of the man. No life dominated by a purpose can be free from sacrifice. It is the familiar story of all men who achieve, even if their achievement be only wealth or fame, or the mastery of men, or creative work in literature or art. And when the purpose of achievement was none of these lesser things, but the marking out of the way by which men might walk to eternal life, the sacrifice became incessant. One least slip, one moment's listening to temptation, and the work of the Son of God would have been undone, his life for naught. When we think of Him as tempted like as we are, and consider the ceaseless conflict by which alone we are enabled to attain even the measure of righteousness which the best of us reach, we gain some idea of the ceaseless, lifelong sacrifice of the Christ. And when, too, we consider this, we realize how it is that there is "none other name given under Heaven among men by which we may be saved." Other men have walked *with* God in the world; He only walked *as* God Himself. Others have set us stimulating examples; He only gave the Perfect Example. Others have sacrificed much in their lives that they might overcome their own sin: He only gave all in sacrifice that He might overcome

sin, not His own, but that of the whole world. Others have followed in His pathway, often by their weakness stumbling and falling or turning aside: He only without slip or fall or error made the way in which He walked Himself and to which He points all men. Such in part was His suffering under Pontius Pilate; such in part was His sacrifice for sin.

But in the story of Christ's redemption work, there tower above the level two heights. Two incidents or episodes of special significance are recorded for us amid the detail which only our reverent imagination can picture. They mark the beginning and the ending of His public ministry, and emphasize two aspects — the inner and the outer — of His sacrifice for us. One is the Temptation in the Wilderness; the other is Calvary.

There is a tendency among a certain class of thinkers to regard the Temptation as an allegory. They think of it as a parable, setting forth for us the spiritual experiences of the Christ before he went forth as the Bearer of the Gospel. To a certain extent, indeed, such may be the case. Whereas the events on Calvary were enacted for all the world to see, the details of the forty days in the wilderness were known only to Him. The records of them could be made known only as He related them; and recalling His methods of speech, we can believe that He disclosed only in their general grouping the

experiences of His sojourn there. Yet we have no reason to doubt that they are historical. What could be more natural, or more in accord with His practice, than that at such a moment He should withdraw from the world, and stand face to face with certain problems and temptations which must meet Him at the outset of His ministry? The voice that cried in the wilderness had called Him to the exercise of His public work. More and more there had come to Him the consciousness of His unique mission in the world. And with that consciousness, in the echo of that call, there confronted Him certain supreme forms of temptation. He went to the wilderness to think and to pray and to prepare. And while He was there the tempter came.

The temptations in the wilderness, then, were, we may believe, actual experiences. And, as such, they stand as the types of temptations which in a lower shape may assail any one of God's children, but in their recorded form could tempt only the unique personality of the Christ. The first and lowest in grade of them illustrates this fact. It was the temptation of hunger. The story represents our Lord as having voluntarily fasted, sustained by the ecstasy of His devotion and prayer and contemplation. When this had passed, nature asserted herself. He hungered. Such a cry of nature would manifest itself, in the case of ordinary men, in the temp-

tation to dishonesty, or theft or even murder; for hunger has urged many a man to crime. But, in the God-man, temptation assumed another form. He needed not to resort to crime to assuage the pangs of hunger; for in Him dwelt the consciousness of His knowledge and control of the higher laws of the spirit which could create the food for which He craved. "Command that these stones be made bread"; whispered the tempter. But with the very temptation came its answer. If the knowledge and command of spiritual forces could enable him to create bread to satisfy His hunger, it could even as well sustain Him without the intervention of material means. In the ordinary circumstances of His life on earth, living in the flesh, it was right that bodily strength should be sustained by material food, that His spiritual power might be given to the purpose of salvation for which He came into the world. But in conditions of stress, that supreme power of itself could sustain Him. It was sufficient to rest upon the "word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Thus we believe that in this first trial, the Son of God conquered for ever the temptation to prostitute His control of spiritual laws to gratify the craving of bodily appetite. It was the first great and notable step in constructing through the wilderness of the material world the way of the spiritual life. It was the sac-

rifice of the body which is temporal to the law of the spirit, which is eternal.

So, likewise, in the temptation of spiritual pride — to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, that by preservation from harm through the exercise of that same spiritual power, men might admire and worship Him. Once for all He triumphed over this temptation. Never, in all His earthly life did He employ power from on high, save for the relief of His suffering brethren, and the upbuilding of the kingdom of His Father. And in the supreme temptation of ambition, “the last infirmity of noble minds.” He refused still stedfastly, to debauch those powers even though He should gain thereby the rule over “all the kingdoms of the world.” It was the sacrifice of that which, next to life, is the dearest possession of a soul of high ideals and far-reaching purposes. Thus, at the outset of the public ministry of the Saviour, alone in the wilderness, He offered the sacrifice of human desire and pride and ambition to the higher law of the spiritual life. Before he entered on his work of preaching and healing and ministration he made the voluntary sacrifice of much that is dearest and most closely allied to human nature. It was necessary to make this sacrifice that the law of the spirit might prevail. To open the way of eternal life it was necessary to hew away those things which are of the substance

of the life temporal. But the supreme sacrifice — the final opening of the gateway into the kingdom of Immortality, could come only at the close of His earthly ministry — for it was the sacrifice of human life itself. We shall consider this in our next chapter.

VII

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

WE have said that the Cross of Christ stands for us as the Symbol of the sufferings of the Son of God, whose whole life was a sacrifice for us. Yet we may not forget that it is especially the symbol of His supreme sacrifice — His death. For, though suffering and sacrifice entered into and pervaded all His life, it reached its climax on Calvary. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” These words of the Master Himself touch the chord of truth in every soul. They are simple; they are true to human experience; and they explain, as no theologies could do, the meaning of the atoning blood of Christ. When we consider them, we voice our assent to them in those other words of His: “Ought not Christ to have suffered and to enter into His glory?” For, when we think of the purpose of His life — to save men by creating for them the way of eternal life through the world’s wilderness, we know that such a purpose could never be satisfied till He gave of His utmost. We know that that way must lead not only through

the vales of peace and over the rough places of temptation and sorrow and suffering, but that it must descend into the Valley of the Shadow and ascend the rugged steep on which stands the Celestial City. Beyond the grave lies Paradise; and the way to it must lead through the gate of the grave.

And, turning to the historic side, the death of Christ on Calvary seems the inevitable culmination of His life of sacrifice for mankind. It was not only that, sharing our human nature, He should partake of the end which is common to all humanity; it was necessary that that way of perfect righteousness should encounter the hostility of unrighteousness. It was inevitable that conflict should come; and not only the struggle between righteousness and sin, but the bitterer assault of those who assumed to be the leaders of righteousness against Him whose life and words showed them that their ways were false and their teaching arrogant. A nature less divine, one whose ideals fell short of the Perfect Life, might indeed have compromised with the Scribes and Pharisees, and been spared the anguish of the Cross. Jesus might have done this, and still stood forth as the world's greatest Teacher. But the Christ, the Son of God, could not yield one iota of the infinite ideal, even when that ideal controverted the teachings of the Law which had been the guide of Israel. As we have already said, to abate one grain from

that ideal, to swerve aside from the pathway which He came to create, to cease from its construction before He had marked it out to the very gate of the Life Eternal, would have made His mission for naught. Such might be the way of a prophet or reformer, not of the Christ.

But, more than all else, it is perfectly logical and evident that the revelation of man's own destiny, which was an integral part of the mission of the Christ, could never have been accomplished without the Resurrection. As no teaching of the principle of righteousness could ever stand beside the example which was contained in the Life of Jesus, so no preaching of the truth of Immortality could ever convince men. Only the actual resurrection of One who had been dead, could prove to the world that life is eternal and man immortal. Thus it was necessary, to complete the work of Christ and the truth He came to reveal, that He should suffer death; for without death there can be no resurrection.

We have thus traced the meaning of our Lord's suffering under Pontius Pilate to its culmination on Calvary. We have seen how the preparation of the Way of Life could only entail incessant sacrifice; and sacrifice means suffering. We have seen, too, that sacrifice could not be complete until Christ had given all, even life itself; that the giving of that life through death was the essential prelude to the

Resurrection; and that resurrection alone could reveal the Life Immortal to which the way led. Such was Christ's atoning sacrifice — the unceasing sacrifice of Himself, culminating in His death on the Cross. In order that the fact of this final sacrifice may be emphasized, the Creed bids us rehearse it in the words: "was crucified, dead, and buried."

It is not necessary, as a part of our present purpose, to recite the tragic story of Calvary. It is the saddest yet sweetest fact in the world's history, transforming the most ignoble of the forms of death into the most glorious. For ever that ancient instrument of torture — the Cross — reserved for the lowest of criminals, stands as the holiest symbol for mankind. Upon it was yielded up the Perfect Life, that man might live for ever. Truly the Son of Man was crucified and truly He died and was buried. It was no tableau of anguish, no simulated death or "suspended animation," no mere hiding in a tomb. The Creed bids us assert our belief that the events recorded are indeed historic. But as we contemplate the divine Tragedy, and feel the stirring in our hearts of deep emotion, it is essential that we learn not to emphasize too strongly the mere physical suffering of the hours of the Crucifixion as the atoning work of our Lord. It is an offense to the power and dignity of the Cross thus to view it. If we are to measure Christ's atoning work for us by

the duration or intensity of His physical suffering, we are doing gross injustice to our faith. It is but an emasculated Christianity which centers its devotion upon the physical anguish, the wounds and the stripes, the torment of the Crucifixion. The interpretation may be fanciful, but it seems as if the virile spirit of the Reformers caught something of this thought in their preference for the cross rather than the crucifix as the symbol of the Faith. For the crucifix, with its representation of the wrung and tortured Figure, emphasizes the thought of bodily anguish; while the cross, empty, like the Holy of Holies, of all save the Presence, stands as the symbol of a life of perfect sacrifice, culminating in death — the Supreme Sacrifice. Many a man has shuddered at the awful conception of a God delighting in the effused blood of His Victim, as the Pagan's gods revel in the burnt offerings and sacrifices of their worshippers. Yet out of that crude and horrible thought, humanity has learned to know and appreciate the ideal sacrifice of Christ. The savage believes that his god delights in the fumes of blood and gloats over the tortures of the victim. Gradually there grows in his mind the thought that, since sacrifice must be offered to win the favour of his deity, it is to his credit to offer of his choicest and best. Thus, little by little, arises the idea of self-sacrifice, the virtue of which exists in the cost to

the giver. Slowly this conception grows, till man realizes that that which is noblest is the offering of the dearest of all — self. Thus the believer cries: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.” Not only that which we love and cherish, but that which we *are*, we yield up to God. Still higher rises the thought. Not only for our own salvation but for that of our fellow men do we yield this dearest of treasures. Therein is the dawn of the Messiah thought, the One who yields himself that others may live. And when in the course of human history, One moved among men, fulfilling these conditions, giving forth all that He had, in self-mastery, in precept, in example, in works, yielding even life itself that others might live, then all that men had learned through the ages of the meaning of sacrifice was realized. And if, in the thought of the savage, the blood of the victim delighted the god, so in the spiritual understanding of the Christian, the blood of Christ is acceptable to the Christian’s God. For it signifies that life itself is given forth in the all-absorbing passion for human redemption. If the Eternal Father could say of the Son who had prepared Himself by complete self-mastery for His earthly ministry: “In Him I am well-pleased,” how much more may we conceive the divine pleasure to be in that life when it had been spent for the love of His brethren. The joy of the angels over one

sinner that repenteth is transmuted and glorified a thousand-fold into the joy of the Eternal Father over the Sinless One who gave Himself that men might live. For that giving of self that life may prevail is the very essence of the divine nature. Thus that word Propitiation, which had its origin in the pagan's idea of pleasing his god to win its favour, received its Christian significance of the joy of God in the one supreme godlike act in human history. That act was threefold. First, the complete mastery over self and the triumph over all temptation to sin; second, by this unremitting mastery the marking out of the pathway of perfect human life through the wilderness of evil; and finally the yielding up of that life through death in order both that love might manifest itself in supreme sacrifice, and that Immortality might be proven by the rising again of One who had been truly dead and buried.

VIII

PARADISE

IN the American Book of Common Prayer the worshipper is instructed that "any churches may, instead of the words, *He descended into hell*, use the words, *He went into the place of departed spirits*, which are considered as words of the same meaning in the Creed." To one who considers this intelligently it is only necessary to explain that many words undergo a transformation of meaning through the centuries; and that the word "hell" is one of these. Its present-day significance as denoting the theological idea of a place or state of punishment for the wicked, is widely at variance with its original meaning of "the place of departed spirits" — which is the meaning of the word of which it is the translation.

But it is well for us to consider what is the thought which the Creed expresses in this word. What is the Church's teaching about the place of departed spirits — the hell into which our Lord descended? Despite our habitual assertion of our belief in it, it may be that the ordinary worshipper understands

but dimly the truth which he professes. It is a very common form of speech to assert that the soul of some faithful one who has passed beyond the grave, is "in heaven." We do not pause to remember that in our recital of the events which form the story of the Perfect Soul, the ascent into heaven follows the Resurrection; but before the Resurrection and immediately after the death and burial, was the descent into Hades — the "hell" of the Creed. If for Him there was the intermediate existence between death and the Resurrection, why not for us? But when we speak of the souls of the departed as "in heaven," we ignore or misunderstand the Church's beautiful and helpful doctrine of Paradise — the Intermediate State of the faithful departed.

No doubt the ignorance of this teaching in a large part of that section of modern Christendom which we call Protestant arises from reaction against the Romish doctrine of Purgatory. But, as we shall see, the perversions of this doctrine are the cause of its rejection by reformed Christianity. The great truth which underlies it can never be rejected and ought never to be ignored. Not only is it the universal tradition of the Church; not only is it suggested by the story of our Lord's life after death; but it appeals to our reason as the natural and logical sequence in the development of the human soul. Simply stated the doctrine is that the faithful soul

after death does not pass at once to the realm of perfect life and joy which we call heaven, but enters a condition of progressive life which perfects its preparation for that highest existence. To this condition is given the name of the Intermediate State, and this place of departed spirits, called in the Greek, Hades, is Paradise.

One of the most striking figures in the Book of Revelation is that of the tree of life. St. John portrays it as growing in the midst of the Celestial city, by the side of the river which flows from the Throne of God. It bears all manner of fruit—yielding its fruitage every month; and its leaves are “for the healing of the nations.” There is a wealth of suggestion in this emblem of the meaning and destiny of human life. For life, like the tree, is threefold in its development; and the divisions of the one find their close analogy in the other. We naturally think of the tree as consisting of root, trunk and branches with their foliage. The root delves in the darkness beneath the earth, seeking water and nourishment as it may find them in the restricted conditions which surround it. The trunk reaches forth upward through air and sunlight, lifting itself higher and higher above the earth from which it sprang. And finally the branches, in the same element of air, stretch themselves in the sunlight, spreading their leaves to its warmth, and bringing their fruit to

perfection. Yet the whole plant is one; through root, trunk and branches courses the sap. Each part helps and sustains the others; but as we advance from the root in the darkness to the mellowed fruit in the sun, there is the ever-rising development of beauty and of life.

So human life is one. The spirit of man which groped in blindness amid the shades of sin and sense is the same which bursts forth in the eternal sunlight of God's presence. The change we call death is but a change of condition. We believe that it is an awakening — the transition from the present condition where we know spiritual realities only by faith and hope, to the condition where we see and know them as they are. And as our spirits break forth into the larger and truer life, we may conceive of them as rising upward in their growth until at last they reach the point in that more favouring condition where they find their perfection in fruitage. Here again is the threefold division. Life in darkness here on earth; life in the light of Paradise; life in its perfection in Heaven.

The very laws of development with which we are familiar assure us of the reasonableness of this thought. Nothing on earth passes from crudity to perfection save through the intermediate stage in which the lower prepares itself for the higher. The worm does not become at once the butterfly; the

seed does not ripen into the fruit. Though the grain which is cast into the ground has in it the elements which shall, after a long process of development, become fruit, it is not at once fitted for that perfection of vegetable life. And if we conceive aright the heavenly estate, we must realize that it is that into which even the holiest of earthly saints are not fitted at once to enter. For Heaven is the reward of the righteous which is bestowed not arbitrarily, but is won by achievement. Heaven is the spiritual life in its perfection; and with the one exception of the Perfect Man, no human soul has ever passed through the gates of death, perfect. In the noblest of the saints of earth there still remains some sin unconquered, some weakness uneffaced. There must still be the period of blooming, of efflorescence, before the seed becomes the fruit. And Paradise may be called the flowering-time of the soul. We may think of it as the period when the soul which here struggled with sin and has won many victories; which has fought the good fight; which has laid hold on the divine hope through Christ, may go on in its development, unhampered by the temptations and afflictions of this world. For in large measure the weights which hinder us in our upward climb are the attributes of our bodies and our flesh. So long as these remain with us we fight indeed against heavy odds in our spiritual increase. Let them be laid aside,

and the soul may go on from strength to strength. When nature is battling with disease, our bodies lie weak and helpless, as all our vital force must go towards driving out the intruder; but, that victory gained, gradually and surely the strength returns; and, once out from the sick-room into the air and the sunlight, the patient becomes well. And the life of Paradise is the life, not amid the hampering and confining surroundings of the flesh, but in the freedom of the spirit. Our fancy may picture there the redeemed soul, gaining strength by its exercise in spiritual grace and love. We may fancy it in the Light of God's Countenance, moving in the Presence of the Master Himself. We may think of its fellowship with kindred souls, learning and gaining by the example of others, stretching forth the hand to help those who are as yet weaker. We think of it as the life where the conflict is over and unhampered growth begun. And that growth is to go on until every act of righteousness and holiness shall be the soul's natural and instinctive act, where every thought is the echo of God's will. And where that achievement has been won, and holiness and harmony with God are the soul's very life, there is Heaven. But until that achievement, the Church bids us believe the soul to be in Paradise, the glad flowering-time, into which it passes through the gates of death, to remain till the final resurrection.

Such a thought as this is no perversion of a truth into a party dogma. The Paradise of the Church Catholic is no Purgatory. It is not a detention pen, where the soul must wait in loneliness and sorrow, until certain trespasses are purged away, or its liberty is bought by the prayers and offerings of the faithful. It is no state to be thought of with horror, and avoided through incessant prayer. It is the soul's natural transition place, through which it passes towards its eternal home. Against a perversion of this thought, Catholic and "reformed" Christianity must protest. But because such perverted teaching prevails among many who profess and call themselves Christians, all the more ought the true thought to be emphasized in all its beauty and helpfulness. As Christ descended into hell, so, may we believe, those who have struggled and conquered here on earth, those whom we have loved and honoured here, have passed into Paradise, to fill out in joy and loving service the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

IX

THE SUPREME MIRACLE

ACCORDING to our habit of mind, we may esteem it a glory or a burden that the Christian rests his faith unalterably on one supreme miracle. In the strict theological sense, no one is a Christian who does not believe in the Resurrection. In the Creed we definitely assert the fact that Christ on the third day rose again from the dead. If we are of the habit of mind which loves the mystic and finds strength in the contemplation of a life beyond our experience, we rejoice in this fact. If we share the spirit which is widely prevalent in our day, and makes it difficult for us to accept that which everyday experience does not attest, it may seem a hardship to assert our belief in an event so unique. Yet the Creed does not hesitate or temporize. A rationalizing Christianity may endeavour to translate its utterance and the testimony of the Gospels on which it rests into figurative significance. We may say that the Resurrection of Christ means only the undying influence of His divine life and character. We may fancy that the Apostolic accounts of the

Resurrection are only a vivid way of expressing the truth of this permanent influence of Christ. Or we may think that upon the over-wrought and sorrowing minds of the disciples there grew the conviction that the Master whom they loved must be immortal; that they fancied they heard His voice as of old, and even now and again saw His shape; and that out of these vague experiences of minds at high tension there were formed into shape the stories of a Risen Lord. Or we may ourselves substitute for a faith in the miracle as recorded, a theory no less mystical and hard to believe; and assume the Resurrection to have been a "spiritual Presence," moving among the faithful disciples.

All these explanations and theories have been resorted to to enable men to profess the Christian faith without accepting the miracle of the Resurrection. Yet since the days of St. Paul the Church has realized that "if Christ be not risen our faith is vain and our preaching vain." She realizes that our faith in the definite part of that one Event which stands alone in history is of inestimable importance in moulding our lives for righteousness and transforming our character to salvation. She states her belief in it as a fact. And were it an event of ordinary nature, there would be little likelihood that its historicity would be questioned. The four independent chronicles of the events attending the life of Jesus of

Nazareth and the days following His Crucifixion, are as well entitled to a place among historical records as any manuscripts of antiquity. Only he to whom the very character of the event is repugnant, can find justification for his unfaith in a fancied lack of authenticity in the writings which record it.

It would be unjust to assume that the only motive for unbelief in the supreme miracle on which Christianity rests is the unwillingness to accept the Christian message or abide by its precepts. Many a devout soul has hesitated to commit itself to this belief. Evasions and explanations such as those we have cited, are the device, not of the thoughtless scoffer, but of the reverent student. Those who to-day with Thomas at the first, are doubtful of their Lord's Resurrection are those who, like him, think they cannot go beyond the testimony of their own senses and experiences. In no age has that spirit been more predominant than the present. We recognize and applaud to-day what we call the "scientific temper." We feel that its principle is the only just one to apply to material and physical laws — to accept nothing as a fact which cannot be proved or demonstrated. And since our knowledge of material laws has made the greatest strides since the adoption of this principle, is it not the right one to apply likewise to what we sometimes call the supernatural? Have we any right to believe that in one

instance in the world's history, laws which in our experience are immutable, were suspended or violated?

In dealing with this question as applied to the Resurrection of Our Lord there are two principles to be borne in mind. One of them we have already traversed in our consideration of the miracle of the Virgin Birth; and need only recall it here. It is the fact that in dealing with events of this nature we have to do with laws which are not of our experience. To recall our former illustration: As the engineers who built the Pyramids knew nothing of the laws with which the electrical engineer of to-day is familiar, so we who know material laws are not familiar with the spiritual laws of which Christ was master. That the Resurrection, like the Virgin Birth, was the result of the action of these higher spiritual laws, is only a rational and proper assumption.

The other principle, which also we touched upon in our consideration of the former miracle, and which it is proper to deal with at greater length here, is this: Mastery over the higher spiritual laws is gained by sinless righteousness, steadfast faith and perfection of character. It may be said that this is a mere assumption, an arbitrary theory. Have we any right to assume that it is a fact? At the risk of seeming to beg the question, we must in answer point to the example of Christ Himself. In the study of all laws, men of science take accepted instances, and

by their comparison and agreement formulate the principle which governs them. In the case of the spiritual law the only instance is the life of Christ. Other lives may furnish fragmentary and isolated examples; none other may be compared with His. Such record as we have of His life, combined with the testimony of those who lived in the light of the immediate memory of it, and the tradition which has come down to us, depicts that life as sinless. Of no other life which history records can sinlessness be even remotely predicated. From His example alone can we study the results of a life of sinlessness. And of Him alone is a resurrection from the dead recorded.

It is but the logic of inference to associate these two facts as cause and effect. Either we may dismiss the whole story as mythical and regard not only our Lord's Resurrection but His whole life as a beautiful fable, or we may accept the one as the natural sequence and result of the other. In the one case we find it the expression of an ideal and hope which is inalienably rooted in the human heart — the ideal of sinlessness, the hope of immortality. In the other case we find the ideal realized, the fact accomplished. This is Christianity's position. Christ lived the Perfect Life. By it He had power over the spiritual laws of life and death; He rose from the dead and manifested immortality. Not only in the supreme miracle may we see the trace of the

power of the Perfect Life. In the Gospel story are other instances which indicate the mastery of the Sinless One over the laws of the lower life. The account of the Transfiguration shows Our Lord in the perfection of His spotless purity. And when He came down from the mount, His first act was one of miraculous healing. To the anxious questioning of his disciples, He told them that such a work as that could be accomplished "only by prayer and fasting." That is to say, only the constant, unremitting struggle against sin is the preparation for the mastery over material things. The words indicate, too, that there may be degrees of this mastery. The disciples themselves could perform works of healing. Their failure to do so in this instance was a cause of grief and wonder to them. It was a more difficult form of mastery — one which could only be achieved by more complete triumph over their own sinfulness than they had yet accomplished. So, too, works of healing have no doubt been performed through the exercise of spiritual laws by the Church in all ages. Those who have attained comparative purity and sinlessness, combined with an earnest, even though ignorant, faith in the power of the spiritual law, have been able to bring about its working. But the supreme and complete triumph comes only through supreme and complete sinlessness. And the Resurrection from the dead was

accomplished once in human history by Him who knew no sin. When St. Paul, in his great Chapter on Immortality (I Cor. xv) has declared the fact of Christ's Resurrection and expressed the hope of human immortality he adds: "*wherefore*, . . . be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." That is to say, in order that ye, too, may rise, live the Christ life of sinlessness, and therein abound.

The believer in the Resurrection of Our Lord, therefore, may support his faith in it in this way. It was not an arbitrary overturning of natural law; but the superseding of it by the higher Spiritual Law. We are unfamiliar with this higher law, because the knowledge of it and the power to exert it come only through sinlessness in character. Christ, the only Sinless One, knew it, understood it, exerted it. Therefore the Resurrection stands unique in history; but it is none the less a fact attested by evidence, conceivable by reasonable faith, and full of the most uplifting import to us of any event the world has known. As such, it is the fact around which Christianity centers. For the Resurrection assures to us our hope of immortality; and this assurance is more to us in the upbuilding of our characters than all teaching or example could ever be.

We shall consider the meaning of this hope when we take up the last section of the Creed which

declares our faith in the Life Everlasting. For the present, we may ask in what way the Resurrection makes it sure to us — how it is that it “brings life and immortality to light.”

In the first place, the fact of a resurrection reveals the fact of the permanence and persistence of life. It assures us that life is not the result of physical or material energy, but is in itself the energy which gives action to matter. If Our Lord took from the grave the body which had lain there in death, then we conclude that the life of that body was not the result of its own action. Life did not end when the functions of the physical form ceased; but it was able to enter again and revive those functions. A candle flickers and dies; its light ceases. We may re-light it, and so long as there remains any of the wax which furnishes fuel for the flame, it continues to burn. But when the fuel is exhausted, the power of that taper is gone; it is itself consumed. But the power to take up the body from the grave is the power constantly to renew and keep whole the physical form. Christ's real life was the spiritual life. He was Himself conscious of the power to lay down His physical life and to take it up again; and that power He manifested in His Resurrection.

Again, the Resurrection demonstrates to us that this permanent and abiding life is the individual life. It was not the mere flowing back into the deserted

channel of the life-stream, as the tide of the ocean flows back into the channel from which it passed out a few hours ago. It was the same life — the individual spirit which He had laid down upon the Cross. He came again in familiar form and mien among His disciples; and before He vanished finally from their sight in the Ascension, His promise was not merely that a vast unseen spiritual Presence should be around them, but “*I am with you alway.*” He, the personal Christ, had not come forth as an impulse from the infinite reservoir of life to quicken for a time one bodily form and lay it down again. He came as a personal identity, and therefore individuality is spiritual and immortal.

To us, therefore, the Resurrection brings hope. The Son of God — the Sinless One — could lay down His life, and by taking again on the third day His old bodily form, could show to the world that life persists and individuality is immortal. We, following afar in His footsteps, know that as yet we have not attained to like power. But we hope and believe that as we have learned to know and have faith in Him here, and have in some measure striven against sin and by His strength overcome it, so our spirits shall abide; and after their training and strengthening in Paradise, shall come forth in glad resurrection to be like Him and know Him as He is — for that is the destiny of him that overcometh.

X

THE ASCENDED LORD — THE JUDGE

THE Ascension is the fulfillment of the Resurrection. The Way of Life had been hewn for mankind, by Him Who had been sent to prepare it. Without swerving or hesitation, He had won that way through the grave and gate of death. His risen Form had come again to assure His disciples that the way was open; that the eternal life of which He had taught them was an accomplished fact. In words which had new meaning to them, because their eyes were opened, He taught them of the things concerning the Kingdom of God. And when He had been with them forty days, thus teaching them, the time came that His work with them must be ended. Then from their sight He ascended into Heaven.

It may be well, in passing, to consider the story of the forty days and the Ascension in relation to the evidence of its genuineness. In common with the story of the Resurrection these events purport to have been experienced only by the disciples and those who believed. Christ's risen body did not appear before the Pharisees who had condemned

Him to death to prove to them how grievous was their error. He did not enter into Pilate's judgment hall and assert again His kingship. The Risen Christ appeared to the women whose faithfulness and love reached beyond His grave. He appeared to the disciples to whom the sad shock of His death had brought wonder and sorrow but not unfaith. The appearance to Thomas was not the confronting of an enemy or unbeliever; it was the confirming of the faith of a troubled friend. If the events of these days had been of another character from that which they were we might well wonder that they are supported by no other testimony; it might seem strange that the Risen Christ did not prove His divinity by open appearance to those who had been his adversaries, and who fancied their triumph complete on Calvary.

But it had not been the purpose of His life to confound His enemies; it had been rather to quicken and strengthen the faith of those who listened to His words and accepted His teachings. Such, too, was the purpose of the appearing of His risen body. It was enough if those who were to go forth into the world and preach His Gospel might also be witnesses of His Resurrection. That Gospel was to be disseminated by those who had learned it from His lips and studied it through His example. They, too, were to bear the tidings of the Resurrection to the world.

But the character of the Event was such that we can well understand that only to those who believed could it be manifested. The fact of the empty sepulchre was one which was evident to Roman soldier and to Pharisee alike. Any one who passed might see the negative evidence of the Resurrection. But that Form itself, transfigured and glorified by the Power which had raised it from the dead — we can understand that it could be visible only to those who had learned a little of the nature of the spiritual law. Crude and vague though the spiritual understanding of the disciples might be, it yet opened their spiritual vision as the vision of Scribe and Pharisee could not be opened. For they had the beginnings of faith, and faith is the dawning of that higher sight to which are revealed things eternal and invisible. We need not, therefore, be troubled that we have the witness only of those who were Christ's friends and disciples to the fact that He rose from the dead and that after His Resurrection He appeared and taught in their presence. We may be confident that those appearances were made only to those who were fitted to receive them and that they are the rightful ones to bear testimony to the fact.

The question of the nature of His risen body and the power which He possessed over it is one which need not here detain us. It must be purely speculative. We find Him recorded as appearing when

the right occasion offered, and vanishing when He would. If we hold fast our principle of the supremacy of spiritual law these events will not perplex us; they are but a part of the eternal dominance of that law when exercised by One who knew and understood its workings. As its final manifestation in the Gospel story comes the Ascension. On the mount of the Ascension, our Lord withdrew Himself from mortal vision, and “a cloud received Him from their sight.” When, therefore, we rehearse in the Creed our belief that He ascended into Heaven, we are asserting our faith in the fact that at that time was the final departure of the Christ from human view. The “cloud” has ever been about His presence — a cloud of human doubt and blindness, a cloud of human sin and frailty. Only a living faith can pierce that cloud and behold the Christ; and faith can see but dimly. Some day, when faith has grown to be strong, human vision may pierce the cloud and behold Him as He is. In the meantime we believe that He has ascended into Heaven, where He occupies His place of equality with God Himself. He who lived the divine life on earth needed not to pass the time of strengthening and perfecting in Paradise, which is the lot of mankind. He has passed into Heaven. Yet His own example sets forth that which may be the hope of every one who in faith and endeavour strives to follow Him. Death,

Paradise, Resurrection, Heaven — that is the hope which stretches itself before the faithful Christian. For Heaven is, we may believe, that state in our existence where every thought and act is the direct answer to God's will. Perfect harmony with God, perfect love for Him, perfect devotion to His service, undisturbed by any opposition of our human will, every motive towards holiness springing as free and instinctive as is the beating of the heart — such is Heaven. Here Christ from the beginning had His home, and hither He has ascended.

And out from this heavenly estate we believe that He shall come to judgment. It is well for us to consider Christ's twofold relation to humanity as its Judge. He is first of all our Judge continually in every act and motive. By the example of His Perfect Life, all that we think or do is approved or condemned. The influence of the Holy Spirit Whom He has sent to guide and stimulate us, makes each day of our lives a day of judgment. Each motive is ranged before Him. If we can recognize every day as our Judgment Day, our progress in the advance of the Christian Life can but be sure; and each day will be a preparation for the Great Day of Judgment. For we confess in the Creed that we believe Christ shall come in His glory to judge both the quick and the dead. We look forward far down the vista of the ages to this final event of humanity's

progress through the saving grace of our Lord. Of its day and hour, He has said, no man knoweth. Its form and method are veiled for us in what was perhaps the most solemn and impressive parable that ever fell from the Great Teacher's lips. The awful picture of the evil and the good ranged for judgment before the Son of Man, has made indelible mark on the imaginations of the faithful. With a literalism which is always baneful in the interpretation of spiritual teaching, mediæval thought seized upon the picture as the true prophecy of the manner of the Last Judgment. Especially in the figure of the fate of the damned, the metaphor of burning, which would seem, from its nature and association to indicate destruction, has been held to signify torture. Upon this point the Creed is wisely silent. All that has been revealed to us in that some day, in the Presence of Christ, the good and the evil will be for ever separated. Beneath the final triumph of holiness, all evil must be done away. No shadow of sin can find place in the eternal kingdom of God. Whether in this final separation, sin and evil still retains its existence, apart from the good, or is absolutely destroyed in the triumph of holiness, we cannot tell. A reasonable consideration of the nature of the kingdom of God, however, induces our belief in the final destruction of evil. In God's great plan, in its completion, there is only the good

and the holy. The very thought of the existence of evil suggests the incompleteness of that plan and mars the conception of its perfection. So long as evil exists in the universe it would seem that the great work which Christ came to achieve is unfinished. From this point of view it appears therefore, that the Last Judgment means the vanishing of evil, as darkness vanishes before the light of day. And since sin cannot be thought of as having an existence apart from the human heart, the question arises whether the conception of the final destruction of sin means the annihilation of the sinner. Our answer to this would be that if we can conceive of a soul in which every thought and motive is sinful, with no impulse towards holiness, with every pure motive crushed beneath the weight of evil, then, if the evil is for ever destroyed, the soul must perish with it. But so long as any impulse towards holiness remains in the soul, there must lie before it the opportunity of making the conquest over sin. We have said that the Creed is silent on all these points, for they are a matter of reverent consideration rather than of revelation. We are told indeed that "the wages of sin is death," that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die"; and these and other expressions from our Lord's Apostles indicate to us that they interpreted His picture of the everlasting fire reserved for the Devil and his angels, as the eternal

flame of purification in which all that is evil is for ever destroyed. And in that thought, our confession of faith in the Last Judgment inspires to the constant judgment in which, before Christ, all good and evil are separated; and we shall stand without spot before Him in that Last Day.

XI

THE HOLY SPIRIT

"I WILL send to you the Comforter," is the Master's promise as He bade farewell to His disciples. And after His Ascension there came to them an experience which they recognized as the fulfillment of that promise. The story of the Day of Pentecost is another of the records of events which can be understood only by premising the existence and action of a higher spiritual law. We shall find it helpful to consider it in relation to the events which preceded it.

After our Lord's Ascension we read that the disciples went back to Jerusalem in great joy. It was an exalted joy, despite the fact that their Lord's visible Presence had passed out of their sight. For in the forty days after the Resurrection they had learned much of life's realities — those things which do not appear to the senses but are nevertheless the abiding and eternal things. And as they hastened back to bear the tidings of the Ascension to the other believers who had been left at Jerusalem, they could but feel the uplifting sense of the consciousness

that they had come face to face with those realities. Life was larger to them now — a new meaning had entered into it. Everything henceforth must be viewed in the light of eternal fact. In the glad enthusiasm of this truth they passed the days while they awaited the next manifestation of God's purpose, in communion and prayer. They were sure that the way of their duty would be shown to them as events went on. It was but necessary for them to wait. They knew not as yet to what mission they might be sent, and what part they were to take in building up the kingdom which Christ had explained to them — the kingdom of which now they saw the true meaning. But in awaiting whatever manifestations of God's will might come to them the memory of the events through which they had passed, and the consciousness of Christ's invisible presence could not leave them. It is a wonderful picture which St. Luke draws for us in a very few words in the opening chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. We see the immediate disciples and the other believers, including the women who had known and followed Jesus, passing their time "in prayer and supplication." There was a room where they might meet, where the hostile people of the city would not break in upon their quiet. There we can picture these faithful few — about one hundred and twenty, as we read — gathering in the morning hours, and

spending the time, perhaps until late in the evening, in talking of their loved Master and His teachings. We can imagine the eagerness with which each one recalled some experience connected with that Wonderful Life, and told the others some word which he alone had heard from the Saviour's lips. And then the voice of one of them would rise in prayer, offering the supplications of the whole assembly, or they would join in the words of "Our Father" and other familiar forms. And when the hour arrived for the simple meal, perchance one of the Twelve would break and bless the bread and wine and give it to the others, telling them how He had bid them do it "in remembrance of Me."

These ten days in that small upper room were days of wonderful and perhaps unparalleled spiritual fervour. There was no thought of self-seeking or of temporal prosperity. All else was lost in the memory of their Lord's words and in the realization of His unseen Presence. We may believe that the very intensity of this spiritual fervour crushed out of sight for the time all sinful and selfish impulse. In holy communion and prayer these faithful few lived and waited. And at the close of these days there occurred an event which, as it were, crystallized and precipitated this spiritual communion into tangible manifestation. That event was the great national religious feast of Pentecost. As for days the atmos-

phere remains charged with moisture, till at length some condition causes its precipitation and it falls in welcome rain to gladden the earth, so that sacred day of the Jewish people was the occasion which brought forth the outpouring of the Spirit which had been lingering in the lives of the few to whom had been given the promise of its coming. It seems necessary to recognize the sequence of events as cause and result. Ten days of profound spiritual saturation of a band of one hundred and twenty souls dwelling together in perfect communion; one great day of spiritual outpouring to renew and refresh human life for ever. On that day of Pentecost, with its gift of tongues and its conversion of the multitude, men first recognized and realized the presence of the Holy Spirit of God.

From this brief historic consideration we may come to some understanding of the nature of the Holy Spirit. We have used as an illustration one of the familiar phenomena of nature — the precipitation of the rain. A similar metaphor is found in the Church's prayers — the "continual dew" of the blessing of the Spirit. The phenomena of nature are borrowed also in the very name "spirit" — the *wind*. So our Lord, in His explanation to Nicodemus introduces the figure of the wind which "bloweth where it listeth." These metaphors are more than a mere analogy. They suggest to us that

the Holy Spirit, like the powers of the air and the earth and the sea is one of the mighty forces of God. We may go further than this, and say that it is the supreme law of the universe. If its working is understood and its principles mastered, it is that which supersedes all else. It may set aside all laws of nature, for it is the highest of all law. It is that supreme law of which we have already spoken more than once in considering the nature of what we know as the miraculous — the ultimate power which is beyond the knowledge of human mind, yet vaguely and imperfectly comprehended by those whose lives have attained some measure of holiness. Jesus Christ, the Holy One, who knew and obeyed this law, could call it into action as He would. The disciples, living lives of holiness under the compelling inspiration of His example and communion, received the manifestation of this supreme law on the Day of Pentecost.

But we must take one more step in our thought. The quality of holiness, which is the essence of this supreme law is an attribute solely of personality. We could not predicate it of the forces of nature — the wind or the lightning or the sea. Neither material nature or the lower orders of life know aught of holiness. In our experience it belongs only to the soul of man — that inner life where lies his personality. The wind, the thunder, the plant, the

beast cannot be holy; man can be such and is bidden to strive after holiness. It is an attribute of personality, and therefore the Holy Spirit is personal. In speaking of this supreme law or force, then, it is always as a Person. "When the Spirit of Truth shall come, *He* will guide you," said Jesus. We come, therefore, to our final step. The supreme law, the ultimate force, the infinite Person — this is none other than God. The greatest force in the universe is the breath of God's being. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Infinite Trinity.

The presence of the Holy Spirit is, therefore, at once the most awful, as it is the tenderest, fact in our lives. We must stand in awe as we contemplate the fact that the Infinite Spirit — the Supreme Power of God — may find Its place in our human souls. And when we think that this Power is ours if we learn and follow the law of its action, we can but tremble at the thought. We, the creatures of the Infinite God — who are we that He should find in us His dwelling, and place at our command His might? But awe changes to tenderest joy when we realize that He has made us that we may be His home, and that He loves to find His abiding-place in the heart of man. It is our destiny to be the temples of the Holy Spirit, the purpose for which we were created. When we realize this, then that Holy Spirit is indeed our Comforter, for we understand

that by holy living we make ourselves ready for His indwelling. And when we understand the principle by which we are enabled to employ as our own the Infinite Power, awe is transformed into humility; for we realize that only as our wills are made subject to the divine will, is that Power ours to employ. The same principle is that which obtains in human control of natural law. Only when we have learned to obey it, does it become our servant. If we stand in the path of the thunderbolt, ignorantly placing ourselves in its way, it strikes us to the earth. If we learn the law of its working and intelligently obey it, it becomes our servant. We provide for it the metallic course along which its current loves to run; we turn that current to fill with its magnetic thrill the sensitive steel — and lo! we have a mighty engine which at our bidding will move our cars and light our streets. We have obeyed its laws and it exerts its might for our comfort. So, too, if we provide for the Holy Spirit the humble and contrite heart, the pure soul where He loves to dwell, His power is ours. But when we have thus made ready the place of His indwelling, the will which bids it act for us is no longer ours but His, for we have subordinated our human desires and impulses to Him.

And He is ever bidding us, teaching us to know the measure of His will towards us. He who loves

to dwell in the pure heart, unremittingly seeks to inspire the hearts of all men to make themselves ready for His coming. In that function He fulfills the promise of Christ to be the Paraclete or Comforter. Christ laid before us the example of the life in which the Spirit may abide. He taught us by precept to follow the way He had made possible for us; but with the removal of His Presence He did not leave us comfortless. Ever at the door of our hearts the Spirit knocks. Through our reason, our sense of justice and honour, all that makes up what we call Conscience, we are incited to holy living. And in the assembly of God's people, where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, in the Sacraments of His Church, in the Word read and taught by commissioned preachers or by God-inspired prophets; in a thousand ways outside of these accepted channels of His grace, the Spirit speaks. He is God in the world that He has made. He who, in the words of the inspired singer of an unknown age, looked upon all His works and called them "very good," is now labouring with infinite patience and divine love, to bring the highest and noblest flower of Creation — the immortal soul of man — to its perfection, even as He is perfect.

XII

THE SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

THERE is an inevitable association between the coming of the Spirit and the Church which conserves the channels of His grace. The sequence in the Creed of our declaration of belief in the Holy Ghost and in the Holy Catholic Church is entirely logical. In the minds of the faithful the Day of Pentecost was the birthday of the Church. For then it was that the multitudes of those who had been witnesses of the Spirit's power, and whose hearts had been stirred by His presence, were made the first members of his Church by baptism. On that day were made the first beginnings of an organized body which should bear witness to the truth and be the minister of the Spirit's grace. The disciples, filled with the Spirit, spoke the word of truth. By the power which came to them they were intelligible to the multitudes of all the nations and languages who were present at the Feast of Pentecost. Many, out of these multitudes, moved at first by the wonders which they saw and heard, listened eagerly to the disciples' message, and by it were stirred to repent-

ance and faith. And those who repented and confessed were baptized. By receiving the common sign of baptism they were then united in a common fraternity; and that fraternity was the primitive Church. That common sign and seal indicated that all alike repented of their sins; and that all alike accepted the crucified and risen Christ as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

In baptizing the converts the Apostles were carrying out the only definite provision for an organization, of which we have record as coming from their Master's lips (Matt. xxviii, 19). Baptism was, and remains to this day, the gateway of admission into the Church of Christ. Broadly speaking, the Church has always consisted of those who are baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. As time went on the administration of baptism was extended, so that not only were those who repented and professed faith baptized, but infants, too young to experience repentance and faith, received the same sign, that they might obtain the benefit of the spiritual fellowship and be trained in the knowledge of those truths which make for salvation.

But it soon became evident, also, that there was need not only for the simple bond which united the members of the Church, but for a more definite organization. The Apostles were conscious that

their Master had committed to their care the most sacred of trusts. Not only were they to preach the word and baptize those who were penitent, but they were to celebrate the Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood. No doubt at first the simple daily meal of faithful ones was made the memorial of His Presence and transformed into a sacrament, as perhaps it was His wish that it should be. But as time went on and the Church spread out more and more into the world, gathering in the weak with the strong, and the unworthy with the faithful, it became necessary to set apart the Eucharistic Feast as something to be guarded with inviolable sacredness. Such abuses as St. Paul records in I Cor. xi made such a course imperative. To guard and administer this sacrament as well as to preach and baptize, there was needed an authorized ministry. At first the Apostles constituted this ministry by virtue of the truth they had learned with Christ, and the grace of the Spirit with which they were endowed. But with the rapid growth of the Church it became necessary that other fit ones be found who should be entrusted with the sacred office, and duly set apart therefor.

Meanwhile there had arisen another function in the primitive church. In carrying out the spirit of Christian charity, and especially the distribution of the common funds, it had to seek the poor and

the sick and needy, and minister to their temporal wants. In the exercise of this duty we have the first recorded instance of the extension of the ministry and the beginning of its organization. When the Apostles heard that some of the worthy widows had been neglected in the distribution of charities they realized that they must have assistance in this portion of the work. Therefore they chose seven men "of good report," and set them apart by prayer and laying on of hands. These seven "Deacons" were to look after the charitable side of the Church's work, while the Apostles "gave themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word." Thus, before many years had passed over the head of the infant church there were, besides the Apostles themselves, ministers of the Word and the sacraments in every city where there was any considerable congregation of believers; and these were aided by a corps of Deacons who looked after matters temporal and charitable.

It was necessary that these scattered congregations be visited from time to time by the Apostles themselves for instruction and admonition and for administering spiritual grace and comfort to new converts. It would appear that the Apostles reserved this duty to themselves as well as that of setting apart or "ordaining" those who were to minister in the spiritual or temporal functions. But before their earthly work was over they would nat-

urally appoint their successors and ordain them to the higher office of the ministry. Thus we find that in the second century after the Resurrection the Church was fully organized with her threefold ministry of Bishops, Priests and Deacons. Of these the lowest order had the duty of ministering to the sick and needy and administering baptism; the next order gave themselves to the ministry of the Word and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist; while the Bishops in addition to these functions possessed the power of ordination and of laying on of hands in what to-day is called Confirmation.

This three-fold ministry with the special duties and functions pertaining to each order has been transmitted in regular historic succession to the church of the present age. It is not within the scope of this essay to rehearse the evidences of such succession and the other reasons which assure those bodies of Christians who have preserved the Episcopal order, that they are integral parts of the organism of the Church Catholic. Such evidence is easy to obtain, for ecclesiastical literature is full of it. There are, indeed, many Christian bodies whose ministers were not ordained by Bishops, and whose administration and government does not follow the order of the early Church, as we have noted it. Among the members of these are many of the most devout and faithful Christians, abound-

ing in good works, their ministry gifted and inspired. It is little wonder that such as these regard the claims of Episcopalians to be "the Church" as arrogant and exclusive. But it is equally easy to understand that the Churchman who realizes that the Church to which he belongs is organized as was that of primitive days, and that the commission by which its ministers preach and administer the sacraments, has been handed down in unbroken line from that time, should be convinced that divine order and authority reside there as they do not elsewhere. He does not doubt that the Holy Spirit dwells in assemblies of those who believe in Him, and that lives consecrated to the service of the Christ receive the gift of the Spirit to speak of His mysteries. But he does feel the assurance that the Holy Spirit wrought in the hearts of men of the olden time to build up the Church into that order and structure which best fitted it to be the channel of the Spirit's grace; and that the Church to-day, having preserved this order and structure, is still the authorized channel of that grace. The Church is the outward form of the Spirit's presence. As the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost were moved to lay the foundations of a great organization, that organization, developed and transmitted down the centuries, continues to be the expression of the Pentecostal Spirit. There have been times when the Church has been disloyal to her

trust, and has filled herself with pride and worldliness; such lapses have in many cases been the cause of the breaking away from her ranks of many who have founded or joined with other organizations. But again and again has life returned to her, demonstrating her mission to be the Spirit's messenger on earth. To-day the hand of fellowship goes out from the Church of historic lineage to the younger churches who work by her side in the Master's Name and by the power of the Spirit; and the prayer of all is that, in such way as the Spirit may lead, they shall be one again.

We have already found that one of the purposes for which the Church exists is the preservation of the sacraments. The Church is the conserver of the Spirit's power; the sacraments are the special channels of His grace. The sacrament of Baptism we have partially described as the entrance door into the Church. But it is far more than that. As the Church itself is not merely an organization of Christian people, but is the dwelling place on earth of the Holy Spirit of God, so Baptism is not merely the gateway into an organization, but the token of a definite act of the Spirit. It is the sign of the Spirit's covenant to strengthen and sustain the soul which has come to Him through confession and penitence; or which in tender years has been brought to Him by devout and faithful sponsors. This sign of this

covenant is what constitutes Baptism a sacrament. There is no better definition of a sacrament than the familiar one from the Catechism: "the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." Whatever fulfills these conditions is a sacrament. The Roman Church asserts that there are seven of these; the Anglican Church limits their number to two, though it modifies this restriction by the explanation: "as generally necessary to salvation." But the number is unlimited of those acts or occurrences which outwardly reveal to us divine grace, and are therefore sacramental. Some may come but once in a lifetime; others may occur with frequent or even regular repetition; or like the blinding light and the voice which revealed the truth to Saul of Tarsus, they may appear but once in history. But every person, at least every thoughtful man or woman, can recall events which have been to them the outward sign of the Spirit's grace. Some moment of peril, which assured us of God's power to save; some new joy, that wakened the soul to a song of thankfulness; some vision of the grandeur or loveliness of Nature, which speaks of the infinite majesty or the beauty of holiness — all such experiences are outward signs of inward grace. Life's sacramental moments are manifold — they may be boundless.

With divine understanding of this truth, our Lord ordained that one of the simplest and commonest of

experiences should be made the constant token of His Presence among His faithful followers. His words of institution of the Lord's Supper are capable of the interpretation that He meant every meal at which His followers should partake of the food and drink of daily need, to be a sacrament of His Body and Blood. But we have already considered how conditions made it necessary that this ideal, if it were ever followed, be modified; and how the Holy Spirit guided the Apostles to set apart the Lord's Supper as a solemn service to be celebrated only by the Priesthood, and partaken by the faithful in communion. And this has remained the great treasure for the Church to keep safe and unalloyed, from the day of the Apostles until now. The divine nature of its origin is shown in the very simplicity of its conception — that the commonest act in life should be the revelation anew of the Christ. The act which gives bodily nourishment is made to bring us into the Presence of Him who is the strength and life of our souls.

For this is what the Lord's Supper — the Holy Communion — does for us; it brings us into the Divine Presence of Christ. It is not necessary for us to consider the strange jugglery of thought by which a materialized Christianity has attempted to presuppose an awkward miracle called Transubstantiation, to explain this Divine Presence. The

worshipper who is gifted in the least with spiritual imagination knows well what it means to be in the Real Presence of Our Lord. Materialism and literalism are always foes to the understanding of spiritual truths, which must be spiritually discerned. When at that Last Supper, Jesus, in breaking the bread and blessing the cup said: "This is my body," and, "This is my blood," we can imagine that one or another of the disciples looked into each others stolid faces with the wondering question: "How can this be?" But we may be very sure that St. John understood what his Master meant. And the St. Johns of every age — those who know that the great visions of life are undiscernible by mortal eye, and the great truths of life inexpressible by human vocabulary — such as these realize the Divine Presence as they eat of the bread and drink of the cup which are His Body and His Blood. To those whose faith is of the type, not of John but of Thomas, who must see in order to believe, it may be helpful to be reminded of the fact that all material organisms are composed of substance which may indifferently and interchangeably exist in one form after another — animal or vegetable, or inert and lifeless matter. That which is part of our bodies to-day was bread yesterday; to-morrow a portion of our living body of to-day will be cast aside to be taken up in other forms. The bodily form is but the means which the

spirit — the life — employs to express itself; when life departs, it leaves but inert matter to be resolved in decay. What difference, therefore, does it make what form of matter the Infinite Spirit of Christ employs to be His visible expression? That which He has chosen is the bread and wine of daily food. Consecrated by His own words it is His Body and Blood received by the faithful in Holy Communion. Again and again these simple forms of matter express and embody the Living Christ. When the human spirit has prepared itself to come to Him by penitence and prayer, and by special and sacred service, the bread and wine are set apart in accordance with the command of the Master Himself, the worshipper knows that in a special sense he is in the Presence of Christ.

As the service at which this solemn Fact is consummated is known as “Communion,” the word suggests to us that further working of the Spirit in the Church, which is called the Communion of Saints. The name signifies something of the mystic; yet the fact is real enough. From the garden-bed of flowers there is wafted a subtle perfume which pervades the air. So that which is purest and loveliest and brightest in God’s children blends in a unity — a communion. We commonly think of the “saints” as those whose names stand out in the world’s history as preëminent in holiness. But the

phrase in the Creed is bound by no such restricted significance. It includes all those who in the battle of truth against sin, have, by the power of the Spirit, overcome. The victory may not have been won all along the line in any human soul. But in greater or less measure the Spirit makes conquerors of those who, through prayer and imitation of Christ, strive faithfully. As the years go on, we find that some problem of the Christian life has been solved, some temptation made less insistent. Then, if we lose not heart or zeal, but still keep on in that endeavour of consecration, we are of the company of the saints. A band of youth graduate from the university. Some of these, filled with the love of learning, continue within her walls to perfect themselves in some branch of study. At last they master it — each one his own department — and the university gives them her seal of attestation of their scholarship. It does not mean that work is ended — for most of them their life-work as scholars has just begun. But certain victories have been won, and the struggles which accomplished them laid back into the past. Between such men there is a certain fellowship — the fellowship of those who have accomplished like results — which other men do not share.

And the Communion of Saints is the fellowship of those who have accomplished like results, by the power of the Spirit, in the hardest and noblest

struggle which is given to mankind. And because the victory is achieved through the Spirit, the fellowship is *in* the Spirit — a mystic bond of communion above all others. In the midst of life's hardest struggle, comes the inspiring consciousness of this communion between those who humbly and gratefully know that they have achieved victory through the grace of the Spirit of God, even in some lesser conflict. It is that which unites us here on earth with the saints in Paradise.

Finally, the Spirit works in the Church in the Forgiveness of Sins. Doubtless, no clearer exposition of the doctrine of Forgiveness exists than in Our Lord's Parable of the Prodigal Son. In that wonderful story the father forgives and restores his son, not when he is in the midst of his degraded surroundings, or when in his starvation he was thinking with regret of the good things which were given to the servants in his father's house, but when he had left these surroundings and made his way homewards. The father went indeed far to meet him, as he saw him in the distance approaching; we feel sure that, had he known where he was, he would have gone to seek and save him. But the pardon was dependent on the son's own act of abandonment of the past and the seeking of home. He who repents is forgiven; but repentance is not mere remorse, nor is it the regret at the suffering

which follow the violation of the Law of Righteousness. These may lead to repentance, which is the forsaking of sin. And when the soul has actually repented, really turned aside with feeble, though resolute steps from the sin about it, then the Father comes, takes in His arms the wandering child and puts upon him the coat and the shoes and the ring of gold, and places the feast before him.

And the Holy Spirit, working in the Church, brings this end to pass. First by stirring the heart of the sinner to repentance, and bidding him pray for strength to forsake his sin; by strengthening his feeble steps in that homeward way; and then by assuring the penitent of the Father's pardon, bidding him "forget that which is behind, and reach forth unto that which is before." If the nature of repentance is understood, the priestly assurance of absolution has its place as the outward sign of the inner grace of the Spirit. We should not be justified in holding, with the Church of Rome, that the Sacrament of Penance is to be numbered among those essential to salvation. Between the penitent child and the pardoning Father there need come no intermediary. Yet many a trembling soul has taken courage when it has heard from lips which it believed had authority to speak, that God forgave its sin. For the Spirit in the Church draws men to repentance; and into that penitent heart breathes pardon and peace.

Above all, the Spirit works towards forgiveness of sins, in that He is the representative of the Christ Who came to call sinners to repentance. We recall how, by His unremitting sacrifice of self and conquest over temptation, He was the Propitiation for the sins of the whole world. By that life and death, He made the Way through which the prodigal may walk to the Father's home. Through Him is the pathway from sin to pardon, from death to life.

XIII

THE BOUNDLESS FUTURE

IN an older form of the English translation of the Apostles Creed which is still preserved in the Visitation Office of the Prayer Book of the Church of England, the "Resurrection of the Body" is the "Resurrection of the Flesh." This is a direct translation from contemporary Latin forms; and shows that at a certain period the Church believed that the actual material flesh and blood of the physical body is to be raised up at the Day of Judgment. If this be the case it is evident that the Church had departed from the belief and teaching of St. Paul. In preferring, therefore, in our interpretation, to hold by his distinction between the "natural body" and the "spiritual body" we cannot feel that we are recreant to the primitive faith, even though our mediæval ancestors were more material than St. Paul in their view of human resurrection. It would be untrue to say that such materialism has altogether passed from the Church, or at any rate from individual believers in the Church. In very modern times treatises have been published containing elabo-

rate calculations to prove that enough matter exists in the earth to furnish bodies for all members of the human race who ever have or ever will be likely to dwell upon it; so that at the Last Day none need be deprived of his resurrection body! But the material conception does not stop short of greater absurdities than this. We spoke in the last chapter of the fact that particles of matter are in a state of transition from one form to another; and of the constantly changing nature of our bodies. It is a familiar axiom of popular science that in the course of years the human body completely changes its material constitution. We might ask, then, many questions as to the composition of the risen body. Is it to be that which we bore in infancy, or in the prime of life or in old age? Is it to be the body wasted by disease which destroys it, which we are to resume for all eternity? And if the reply be that it is to be none of these, but a new body which the spirit forms from the dust of the earth, our rejoinder is: Why, then, think at all of a material form? Is it not better to understand and accept St. Paul's great and true conception of the "spiritual body"?

The purpose of the Church in placing this phrase in the Creed is to attest her faith in the continuity of individual life. Whether we believe with our forefathers of the Middle Ages, or with St. Paul and the Church of the present day, this is the purport

of our belief. The Risen Body is the continuance of our individual life. It is the protest of the church against any conception of a Nirvana as our future state — an existence from which all desire and all thought shall have been swept away till the individual spirit has become merged in impersonal universal spirit. It is likewise a protest against the thought of the survival of life in the feeble form of the “shades,” such as the Romans conceived to be the existence of the soul after death, and was nearly all the idea of immortality which the ancient Hebrews possessed. The Christian’s conception of the life beyond the grave is not one of dreaminess or feebleness, but of vigour and activity. We believe that into that life beyond is to be projected all that is strongest and best in life as we know it to-day. We believe that the experiences which this life affords, save only those which come of the conflict with sin and the flesh, are to be our experiences, enlarged and purified, hereafter. The life of eternity is to be the social life — that is, the life composed of individuals of varying gifts, graces and tastes, which by association and contact stimulate one another to action. The life which now is, in which each individual is embodied in visible flesh, is the training ground for the higher social life. As we know it here, that life includes conflicts, strifes, jealousies, hatred, side by side with friendship, love, cooperation. In the edu-

cational process it has been necessary that conflict should enter. But the whole purport of the teaching of Christianity has been to replace strife with brotherhood, and to show men that Love, not conflict is the ultimate law of life. With the rudiments of this lesson learned in the social existence here, the individual enters the life hereafter, to find there Love triumphant. What he has learned of friendship and brotherhood, of self-abnegation and altruism, will find its fruition there; and the impulses which in the earthly existence are perverted into jealousies and envies will find their scope in the endeavour for the prizes of the high-calling of God.

In the education which we receive here on earth for this higher society, the body of flesh and blood fills its needed part. As the child's slate or the student's note-book retain in visible symbols the problem in mathematics, or the instructor's apparatus demonstrates a law, so our bodily functions symbolize and demonstrate spiritual facts. The brain-cells crystallize and express thought, the muscles embody strength. But thought and strength are not brain-cell or muscle; they are spiritual realities. Through these physical processes we are taught eternal truth; and when these truths are mastered we are no longer aided but rather hindered by the mechanism which has been employed in our instruction. To elaborate St. Paul's thought, we

may say that the body of flesh is the symbol which in our imperfect state is needed to express and make us realize the spiritual body. But the spiritual body is the real body. It is that which has given the material body its coherence and life; it is that which abides; it is that which is to go on retaining the individual character which it has built up in this life, purifying and expanding it in the light of God, in the Life Everlasting. That we hope to be, not impersonal factors in a universal whole, but conscious, living, individual members of a social organism, is what we mean when we declare our belief in the resurrection of the body.

And this is our hope for eternity. The vision of its consummation reaches on through the boundless vistas of immortality. For the faith in Immortality is the mainspring of Christian endeavour. It is more than that; it is the very basis of the whole fabric of Christian thought and life. And yet like the Fact of God Himself, it is unprovable, undemonstrable. We believe that Christ revealed it to us in the Great Miracle, when the opened sepulchre gave forth His Living Form. Christianity can read no other meaning than this into that matchless story — that Life is immortal and the grave but an episode in its development. It is evident that such an interpretation responds to a longing which is all but universal in humanity. We may not call it a primi-

tive instinct; for it is doubtful if it began to develop before the human race had been for centuries dwellers upon the earth. Even the spiritual ancestors of our religion knew it but dimly. To be "gathered to his fathers" was about all the thought of immortality which was in the mind of the Jew of olden time. Yet we find its rudiments in ancient civilizations; we find it in many savage tribes of yesterday and to-day. It appears in a modified form in the Buddhist's vision of his Nirvana as the culmination of a series of transmigrations; and the cult of ancestor-worship hints dimly of it. We ask if the existence of such a longing is not in itself evidence of the fact of immortality. When men hunger is there not some truth to feed them? But we know that such reasoning, though it may strengthen our faith, cannot prove to us that we are immortal. It is so with every endeavour which men have made by thoughtful and devout reasoning to demonstrate the necessity of immortality. They lead us to the point where we say: "It must be so"; and yet there still stands a gulf which logic and reason cannot bridge, and which can be crossed only on the wings of faith.

But the Christian, standing by the open tomb of his Risen Lord, points out these facts of history: First, that the life of Jesus Christ was a perfect life; it overcame every obstacle, and won the mastery

over itself. Second, that life showed by its Resurrection that it was immortal. The inference, then, is that *perfect life* is immortal, and that in so far as we follow the life which Christ unfolded we become partakers of the immortality which He revealed. It does not prove to us that all existence is immortal, and that therefore the Life Eternal is a state into which every soul is to enter. It does demonstrate to us the fact that immortality exists for those who win it. It incites us to lay hold on Eternal Life, by every means which divine love has provided to enable us to "abound in the works of the Lord," and follow Him Who is the Way the Truth and the Life.

To lay hold on Eternal Life! To that end exists the Creed, which has been our study in these pages — that the Child of God may win the immortality which is his right. We have traced its simple unfolding of the truths which men ought to know and believe to their soul's health — the existence and nature of God, the story of the Christ who won the path of Life, the Holy Spirit and His embodiment in the Church. To know and believe these things is the divinely-ordered aid and inspiration in our winning of Eternal Life. That is the Great Endeavour for which we are placed here and given each our special endowment of mind, body and estate. It has been alleged in criticism of the Christian

system that it appeals to the selfish love of reward, in offering Heaven as the prize for faith and righteous living. But such criticism misses both the incentive of Christian endeavour, and the true understanding of the heavenly estate. We strive for the Life Eternal because without it the rule of Love and Righteousness is meaningless, and we might more logically "eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." We strive for it because it is the supreme destiny of man. The Eternal Father, who in His long process has led Creation from chaos to its fitness for human life, and has brought man to his place of supremacy therein, has ordained that through the coöperation of man shall be wrought the highest and noblest phase of Creation's development—immortality. Because He has placed this destiny before us and bidden us win it, we are to strive for it.

And if Heaven is our reward it is such in the sense of the fruition of our endeavour. It is indeed a reward, but not one of arbitrary nature or making its appeal to the selfish sense. To feel within us, as all do feel in our better moments, that our spiritual powers and impulses are hampered in their exercise by the trammels of flesh, and then to look forward in utter faith to their growth and development in the risen body—this is a vision of reward which can but stir the noblest and best within us. In our consideration of Paradise we thought of it as the

flowering-time of the soul, and let our fancy depict the glad growth of our spirits from strength to strength. And as the ages of Eternity move on, the flower is to be crowned by the fruit. The character of each child of God who strove against sin and temptation on earth, strengthened and developed in Paradise, will be established. And that is Heaven. To live for ever united with those whom we have loved on earth, and with all the saints, in the presence of God, catching joyfully every echo of the divine will, and bringing to it our glad response, each life perfect in its own individuality, and yet in complete harmony with the whole social order, every endeavour tireless because self is overcome and joyous because Love is triumphant, every action inspired by the motive to fulfill the eternal purpose of God, and therefore ever crowned by achievement — such is the vision of the heavenly life for which the Christian dares to hope and pray and act.



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